

JUNE 2017

AFRICA

PLAYBOY

MEET THE NEW
CREATIVES

THE INTERVIEW
BILLY BOB THORNTON

NEW FICTION BY
DENNIS LEHANE

KIM GORDON
ROCK ICON AND
VISUAL ARTIST

20Q: KUMAIL
NANJANI

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PLAYBILL

Kim Gordon

For three decades the Sonic Youth co-founder occupied the apex of alternative rock, and she remains a cultural icon today. Gordon manifests her voice across multiple disciplines as half the music duo Body/Head, whose latest record, *No Waves*, is out now, and as a conceptual painter, whose work we celebrate in *Artist in Residence*.



Melissa Seley

This Los Angeles-based writer had never pined for body ink before profiling Scott Campbell, the fine artist and tattoo guru who has fun with our Rabbit logo and a Playmate in this issue. "His advice not to overthink it shifted the tides," says Seley. "Now, if the impulse ever strikes, I'm going to follow my gut and walk right into his shop."



Ryan Lowry

Who better to take on our *New Creatives* feature than Lowry, who shot *The Renegades* for our October 2016 issue? This time around, the photographer captured his subjects in their respective creative spaces, even snapping away as feminist artist Natalie White posed topless with an American flag on Wall Street.

Dennis Lehane

Lehane is the man behind some of our era's most masterful psychological thrillers, including *Shutter Island* and *Mystic River*. In *The Sparrow*, an exclusive excerpt from his latest novel, the *New York Times* best-selling author tells the tale of a journalist who must decide whom to trust when an old acquaintance unexpectedly appears.





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CONTENTS

- ART** *A-list tattooist Scott Campbell's inky depths hold an affinity for skulls; he emblazons our Rabbit on a Playmate* **10**
- GIRL FEATURE** *Leila Lerm the sensual adrenaline junkie who ranks first for sex appeal* **14**
- CULTURE** *Amnesty International, the Women's March and the fight to legalize consensual prostitution* **22**
- PLAYBOY ADVISOR** *Camgirls, manscaping and how to be better in bed: Bridget Phetasy levels up your sex life* **26**
- FOOD** *Chef ray Garcia proves all vegan tacos are not created equal* **28**
- TRAVEL** *From Paris to New Zealand, where you absolutely should be wandering in 2017* **32**
- INTERVIEW** *Colourful Hollywood outcast Billy Bob Thornton still doesn't give a damn about show business* **36**
- COVER FEATURE** *Amy Taylor the sun-kissed Californian goddess with curves in all the right places* **44**
- MY WAY** *How Shawn Stussy became the street-style god we know today* **52**
- 20Q** *The Big Sick's Kumail Nanjiani isn't going to keep quiet about Trump's America* **54**
- THE NEW CREATIVES** *How artists are redefining beauty in 2017* **60**
- GIRL FEATURE** *Kindly Myers the all-American Playboy model and blonde bombshell* **70**
- ARTIST IN RESIDENCE** *The visual music of Sonic Youth frontwoman Kim Gordon* **78**
- GIRL FEATURE** *Elif Celik the first international Turkish playmate's looking sexy as ever* **82**
- FICTION** *A journalist doesn't know whom to trust after a viral TV disaster in Dennis Lehane's The Sparrow* **90**

ON THE COVER *Amy Taylor, Photography by Ryan Dwyer*

No 59 June 2017



Bigfoot Car Detailing Centre

Bigfoot Car Detailing Centre South Africa is an official partner of Rupes S.P.A Milan Italy.

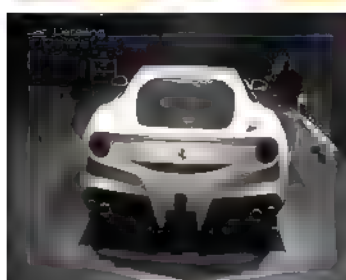
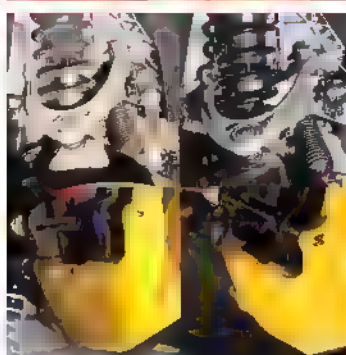
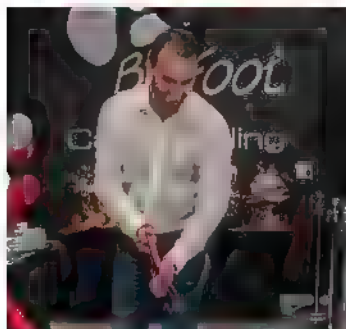
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RUPES



Why Bigfoot Car Detailing Centre?

I have been involved in the detailing industry for over seven years now. My days as a professional detailer began with Swissvax a good few years ago. The day I decided to make it into a business, my main aim was to differentiate myself from the rest of the companies out there and I did this by associating myself back then with a premium brand like Swissvax, which was my stepping stone. Ever since then I have been lucky to establish a loyal client base including corporates such as Porsche SA, Daytona Group, Audi etc. However, servicing my clientele was purely as a mobile business.

I've always had the dream of establishing a centre but not just any detailing centre, something that would stand head and shoulders above the rest. My motto was from the beginning "When you do something, do it the right way or don't even do it at all."

Along came the launch of the Rupes Bigfoot Car Detailing Centres, with the first one being set up in Qatar. What they did with that centre resonated with me and what I wanted to achieve with setting up my own centre here in South Africa. From polishing systems, to the revolutionary machinery, to the science behind the centre design, to the technical specifications around the lighting systems to the entire corporate image. Everything was just unbelievable to witness and I saw my vision of developing a world class detailing centre in the Rupes Bigfoot brand.

The opportunity to create a centre like no other in South Africa presented itself and I grabbed it with both hands.

The rest as they say is history.

The detailing industry in South Africa is still immature in comparison to the United States or Europe, however it has come a long way over the years with people starting to understand what the industry or rather what the profession is about. It's not just about cleaning cars. One of my main goals is hoping to create a greater awareness about the industry and profession as well and share the knowledge I have gained over the years. One of these ways will be via the Bigfoot Detailing Academy.

A first for South African detailing. I have been invited to the Bigfoot European Seminar in March to present the SA detailing centre as well as to facilitate training sessions to over 400 attendees. I will be sharing the stage with some of the world's most renowned detailers, Gideon King, Larry Kosilla and Jason Rose to name a few.

Bigfoot Detailing Academy

The centre in JHB will also become the first formalised detailing academy in South Africa with a formalised training curriculum developed by Rupes Global Training Director Jason Rose. Jason has been involved in surface treatment for 35 years and many may know him from his involvement with Meguiars and he is one of the most respected technicians in the detailing industry.

Bigfoot Product Range

Opening of the centre has also presented the opportunity to distribute the spectacular range of Rupes Bigfoot Polishers and accessories as well as the new range of Rupes Car Care Products. The innovative range of Bigfoot polishers flipped the industry on its head and has revolutionised the industry worldwide. It has become the detailer's tool of choice due to its ease of use, being very safe on paintwork and extremely efficient.

Bigfoot Car Detailing Service Offering

We have various service offerings from our basic paint protection detail which takes about eight hours. Complete interior detailing to our most comprehensive treatment - The Bigfoot Signature Detail, which will take anything from about five days to complete.

Paintwork protection includes premium Swissvax Waxes and Gtechniq Coatings which come with a 7-year manufacturer's guarantee.

Our value-added services include the fitment of self-healing paint protection as well as vehicle wrapping utilising the best quality vinyl available in the market.



ART

SCOTT CAMPBELL

He has inked A list celebrities and carved sculptures out of legal tender; now the artist (with help from a Playmate) takes on the Rabbit

Scott Campbell, fine artist and bicoastal tattoo purveyor, has always had a thing for skulls. He would carve them into school desks as a kid growing up outside New Orleans, where, he says, “artsy fartsy was not honoured, and it was all about who could catch the biggest bass.” He got a skull tattoo on his leg at a grimy parlour in Houston when he was 16 years old — the first of dozens that now festoon his body like graffiti on the walls of CBGB. As a tattoo artist, Campbell has inked skulls, as well as innumerable other designs, into the hides of clients ranging from truckers to surfers to celebrities such as Johnny Depp, Jennifer Aniston, Marc Jacobs, Courtney Love, Heath Ledger, Penélope Cruz and Lake Bell, Campbell’s wife.

As a fine artist, he has carved three-dimensional skulls out of stacks of dollar bills, etched delicate skulls inside ostrich-egg shells and inked skulls onto patches of pigskin he suspends inside watertight frames filled with preservatives. These pieces regularly appear in international galleries including Moran Bondaroff (formerly OHWOW) and Deitch Projects. For *Whole Glory*, an ongoing participatory exhibition he likens to a palm reading, Campbell inks tattoos — including skulls wearing top hats, biting down on roses, sporting headbands — onto the arms of anonymous strangers who blindly stick their fists through a hole in a fence, on the other side of which sits Campbell like Oz behind the curtain.



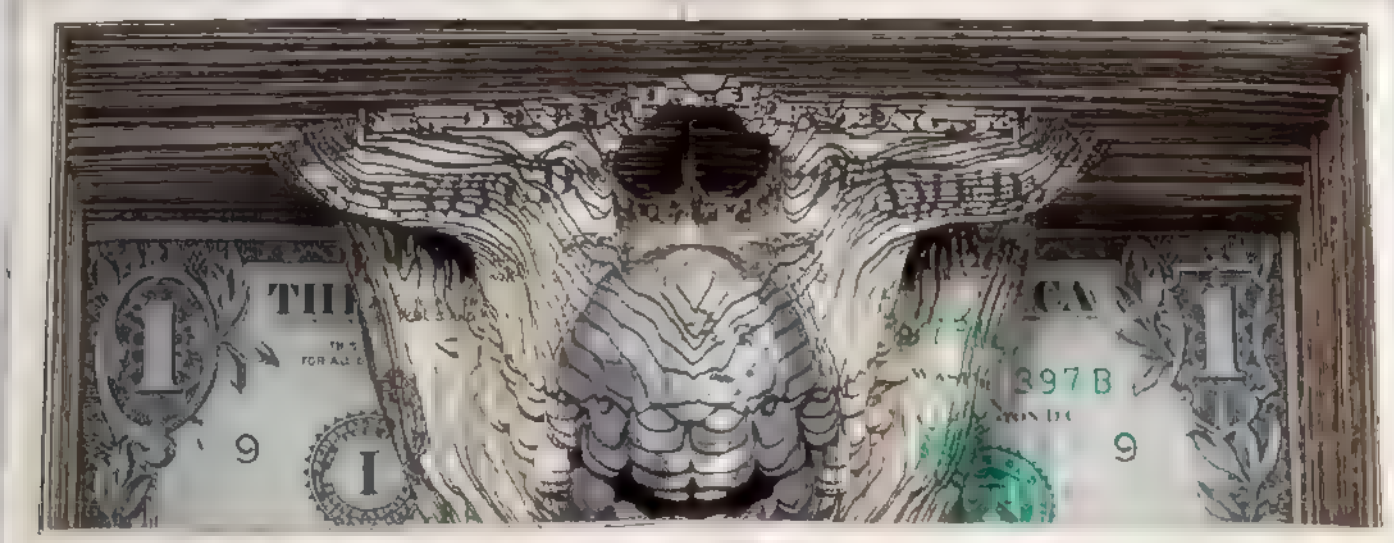
Then there are the skulls he draws in impermanent ink on his two-year-old daughter, Nova, before she heads to school — skulls and starfish, garbage trucks, cars, rainbows. And there is the ominous beaded steer skull that towers above his desk in the downtown Los Angeles art studio where he works when he isn’t inking clients at the newly opened “secret” outpost (entered through the back door of a Shinola store) of his legendary Brooklyn tattoo studio, *Saved*.

When pressed, Campbell traces his cranial fixation to the ancient artistic tradition of skulls as symbols of the fleeting nature of life. But he’s quick to add that tattooing “serves a primal need people have always had to define themselves,” offering a sense of control amid chaos — in the throes of love or grief or heartbreak. So what was the import of that inaugural Houston tattoo? Campbell attributes it to an adolescent desire to make independent decisions, before adding, hesitantly, that his mother, Maggie Campbell, had just died after battling cancer for eight years. “She really normalised the whole cancer thing and death,” he says. During medical treatments, she would let Campbell and his sister mount one of her wigs on a remote-control car and use it to chase the family dog around the house. If she needed her son’s help with injections, “she’d draw a smiley face on her butt, and I’d stick the needle in.”

Maggie’s free-spirited ethos is evident in Campbell’s claim that the biggest mistake first-time tattoo clients make is overthinking it. “Whatever you’re feeling when you get the tattoo is what you’re going to see for the rest of your life,” he says. “If you’re feeling stressed about it, that’s what you’re going to see. Keep it light and spontaneous.” What about those diehard romantics who ask for the cliché of a sweetheart’s name? Campbell says he never cautions against the decision, as is standard tattoo-artist practice. “If you’re going to fall in love, I don’t think you should hold back or second-guess yourself. Go all-in.”

As his cross-country courtship of Lake Bell suggests, Campbell tends to live up to his own ideal of romantic spontaneity. When the two met in 2011 on the set of Bell’s HBO show, *How to Make It in America*,







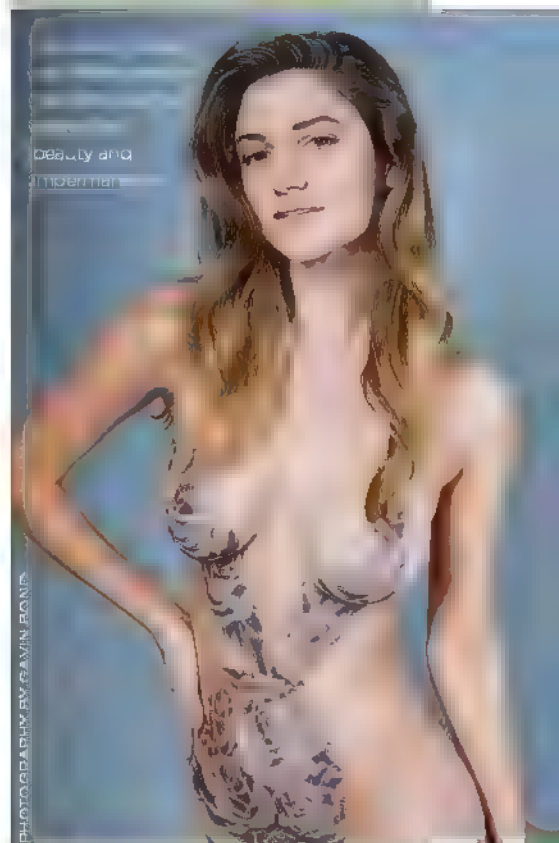
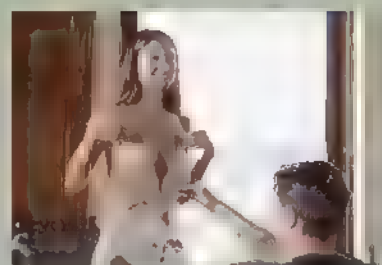
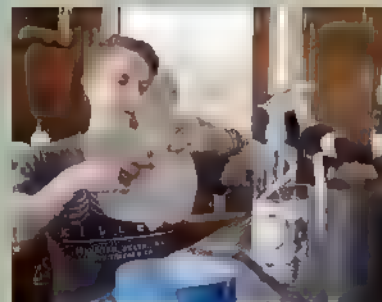
ART



Clockwise from top left: Campbell's LA studio from *As It Pleased the Lord*
Opposite from *A Ways Almost There* **Previous spread**, left from *Applied Poetry*

she was living in L.A. and he in Brooklyn. "I knew she was my one shot at healthy domesticity," Campbell says. Undaunted by distance, "I got to fall in love with her the way I wanted—making her things and writing letters. Once I mailed her a tiny, ring-size box. A tag on top read, 'This is...'. Inside, a really thin paper unfolded into a giant poster that said '... a love letter.'"

When the chance arrived to ply his trade on a *Playmate*, Campbell's sly wit and eye for iconography again came to the fore. Taking inspiration from a 1968 *PLAYBOY* cover that features a bathing suit cut into the shape of the Rabbit Head, he opted to illustrate the immortal silhouette entirely out of tattoo roses—a double homage to Mr. Playboy and to classic flash art, and the perfect complement to March 2017 *Playmate* Elizabeth Elam's natural beauty. So how does an artist go from skulls to our Rabbit's famous visage? To hear Campbell tell it, the two aren't as different as they may seem. "When I was younger, the skull was this rebellious mantra," he says, "this little punk rock symbol of pushing against what was around me. Now it's become an old friend. It makes everything seem a little less severe and a little more light-hearted." ■



PHOTOGRAPH BY GAVIN FORD



Leila Lerm

The super sensual free spirited wild child who loves adventure
by JASON FLEETWOOD DM PHOTOGRAPHIC





About me

I'm just a free spirited wild child who loves adventures and doesn't have time for anything that doesn't move my soul.

Personal goals and career ambitions

I want to live every day to the fullest. To travel further my education to one day do the Silk Way or Dakar Rally and perhaps owning a McLaren Tac 50 and a Koenigsegg. I'm so very focused on growing not only motorsport in South Africa but women in motorsport.

Who inspires me

I draw a lot of inspiration from nature - things like shooting stars and tiny plants growing out of cracked concrete. But if I had to pick one person, it would be my mother. She is, without a doubt, the most amazing person walking this planet.

My favourite quote

"For what it's worth, it's never too late to be whoever you want to be. I hope you live a life you're proud of, and if you find that you're not, I hope you have the strength to start over" - F. Scott Fitzgerald

Turn on

A well-groomed man who knows how to treat a woman. Intelligence and a great sense of humour. Being a good driver is a must.

Turn off

People with more swagger than substance.

My perfect date

I love random adventures. A perfect date for me can literally be anything from great food and drinks to go karting, watching stars on the hood of a car, or talking and laughing into the early hours of the morning. Watching sunrises and cuddles. I adore cuddles.

My girl crush

Mila Kunis

Three things I cannot live without

Adrenaline, dopamine and serotonin. Basically my dogs, my family, and there's a silver necklace with a little heart charm that I almost always wear. It was given to me by someone I love dearly.

My guilty pleasure

Consuming superabundant amounts of energy drinks.

My favourite food

I'm a foodie. I love to eat and I love to cook. I can probably name a million things right now but nothing beats a good steak.

My biggest fear

I have a form of Globophobia - a fear of popping balloons.

One destination I'd love to visit

There are so many but top of the list is doing a tour of Chernobyl.

I'm not embarrassed to say

I bath with rubber duckies.

To see more of this sensual beauty you can follow Leila on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram @LeilaLerm











Bra 34B

Waist 65cm

Hips 79cm

Weight 53kg

Eye Colour hazel



A NEW DAY

for the World's Oldest Profession

Resident Evil celebrates its 20th anniversary with some next level immersive horror

When Eileen, a former prostitute, was working the streets of Seattle, she dressed more like a mall rat than a sex kitten: jeans, a T-shirt, Chuck Taylors. She chose this look not to attract a certain type of customer, or even to make her days of wandering the streets more comfortable.

"I didn't wear high heels or a negligee," she says, "so I could run from the cops." Now 53, Eileen (who asked that we withhold her last name) is a social worker. Thinking back on her time in

By **JESSICA P. OGILVIE**

the sex industry, she's emphatic in her belief that she would have been safer if her work hadn't been criminalised. In addition to worrying about the police, she was harassed by clients, robbed of her few belongings and unable to access health care for fear of being stigmatised or reported. And too often, law enforcement did worse than make arrests.

"I've had cops tell me that if you do this or that" — i.e., perform sexual favours — "they'll let you go. It happens every day. There's probably some

woman getting shook down while we're having this conversation."

For centuries, law enforcement, government and religious organisations have criminalised prostitution and other forms of sex work. But the oldest profession in the world doesn't seem to be going anywhere, and according to both sex workers and a range of experts, keeping it illegal serves only to endanger those engaged in the practice. That's why, in August 2015, Amnesty International — one of the largest human rights organisations in the world — announced it would

ILLUSTRATION BY JON CEN



CULTURE

join the effort to decriminalise sex work.

In May 2016, the group released its official policy paper on the issue. The 17-page document states that continuing to treat sex work as a crime infringes on the human rights of consenting adults. It recommends repealing laws that penalise sex workers, educating law enforcement on how to protect sex workers and providing health care that's free of stigma and discrimination.

Patricia Schulz, a United Nations gender equality expert who sits on the organisation's Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, lays out the cost of ignoring those recommendations.

"When prostitution is criminalised, sex workers risk being abused," she says. "They risk being manipulated. They risk being forced to have sex with police workers. If they're brought to detention, they might be raped by other inmates. They might be raped by other workers. There's a whole series of violations of their rights arising from the situation."

This insight comes after years of hearing from sex workers in many countries, studying the issue and, she says, "travelling a long way" from her initial view on the matter.

"When there's no penalty, it means sex workers can have an apartment, they can have an alarm system, a guard to make sure nothing happens," she says. "From a pragmatic position, there's no benefit of criminalising the activity."

Schulz's line of thinking, however, has some surprising detractors. Amnesty International's 2015 announcement was met with a Change.org petition signed by, among others, Lena Dunham, Meryl Streep, Kate Winslet and Emma Thompson, asking the organisation to re-evaluate its position. The petition states that "the sex industry is predicated on dehumanisation, degradation and gender violence." It calls prostitution "a harmful practice steeped in gender and economic inequalities."



UN gender equality expert Patricia Schulz

In January, a dispute erupted among organisers of the Women's March on Washington over the inclusion of sex workers' rights in their official platform. Reportedly intended to embrace all groups marginalised under the new presidential administration, the platform initially included the phrase "we stand in solidarity with sex workers' rights movements." Then, on January 17, reporters covering the march discovered that the phrase had been quietly removed. Following an uproar on social media, it was put back in and currently reads "we stand in full solidarity with the Sex workers' rights movement."

March organisers made no formal statement about the removal or reinstatement other than to tweet the phrase in question on January 19 with the hashtags #WhyIMarch and #WomensMarch, they did not respond to PLAYBOY's request for comment. But the surrounding controversy indicates that even among highly progressive women advocating for their own bodily autonomy, sex work is still a lightning rod.

Savannah Sly, president of the US-based Sex Workers Outreach Project, has worked for more than a decade in the sex industry. She argues that those who oppose her profession, while perhaps well-intentioned, disregard the basic rights of sex workers to do their jobs and do them safely.

"God forbid something does happen and I'm assaulted or robbed," she says. "I am an outlaw."

...

Opposition to prostitution is as old as prostitution

itself. As far back as the year 596, the king of the area now known as France and Spain declared that sex workers should be flogged and banished. Sex work has been frowned upon in the United States since the Pilgrims first set up shop in New England, and by the early 1900s, prostitution was officially criminalised in most US states.

"There was such social stigma to it," says Melinda Chateauvert, author of *Sex Workers Unite*. "Prostitutes were considered to be ruined."

In recent decades, things have changed. Measures introduced by lawmakers that are based on morality alone—think opposition to marriage equality—tend to face a steeper battle in the court of public opinion than legislation with an eye toward, say, protecting vulnerable members of society. In response, the movement to shut down the sex industry hasn't died; instead, it has grown more subtle offshoots whose rhetoric often conflates all prostitution with sex trafficking.

"Before, sex workers were seen as dirty whores," says Sly. "Now, these women are victims who need to be rescued." One of the largest anti-prostitution outfits is the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, a New York-based non-profit founded in 1988. CATW's goal, according to its website, is to "end human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of women and children worldwide." The group asserts that all sex workers need saving, regardless of how or why they engage in their work. A 2011 paper published on its website claims, "Prostitution is a sexually exploitive, often violent economic option." (CATW declined to be interviewed for this article, stating, "Please don't take this personally, but we don't interview with PLAYBOY or any other pornographic magazine as a matter of policy.")

"IF WOMEN CAN MAKE THESE CHOICES FOR THEMSELVES, MEN NO LONGER CONTROL THE WORLD."



The basis of this position — that all sex workers are victims — makes no distinction between consenting adults and underage or otherwise vulnerable people who are forced into sexual labour. Amnesty International states clearly and repeatedly throughout its 2016 policy paper that the two are not interchangeable: “Forced labour and human trafficking constitute serious human rights abuses and must be criminalised. . . Human trafficking, including into the sex sector, is not the same as sex work.”

Schulz clarifies the point further: “The notion of selling sex services is really within the context of a decision made by two adults who negotiate a certain price for certain acts. If a person is being trafficked and is obliged to perform sex acts, it’s a form of rape.”

• • •

The stigma that all sex workers are damaged, traumatised or victimised spills over into the lives of those engaged even in legal work, with very real and serious consequences.

Porn actress **Bonnie Rotten** — in 2014, at the age of 20, she became the second-youngest woman to win the AVN Award for female performer of the year — encountered this problem while trying to report a sexual assault to police.

Several years ago, she discovered she had been raped in a particularly gut-wrenching way. Her attacker filmed it and posted the video on the internet. She says the man drugged her before assaulting her. “I didn’t really know what happened until the video came out,” she says.

Rotten hired a lawyer, but by that point she had already become famous for her work in pornography. When she went to the police, they recognised her. “They acted like I was a scumbag for trying to do something about it,” she says. She eventually settled two years later, succeeding in having the video of her rape taken offline. But the ordeal wasn’t without trauma.

“It’s very hard for any of us to go to the police when this stuff comes up,” she says. “The legal system doesn’t look at us as an equal in the community. It’s like, ‘You guys agreed to this by spreading your legs once on camera. How are we supposed to differentiate?’”

Nowhere in this discussion is anyone making the argument that all sex workers love their jobs. Some women (and men — sex workers are

predominantly, though by no means exclusively, female) enter the field because of financial problems, a lack of educational opportunities or a dearth of other job prospects. What makes sex work stand out from other lines of employment, though, is that while plenty of people don’t like what they do for a living, few industries inspire the formation of non-profits intent on outlawing them.

With that in mind, it’s hard to accept that much of the anti-prostitution platform isn’t built on the same puritanical values that inspired the criminalisation of prostitution. Sex work, after all, touches on some uncomfortable truths about sexual desire — truths that perhaps not everyone wants to acknowledge.

“There is a difficulty in accepting that if there are prostitutes, there are clients,” says Schulz. “It’s not very comfortable for many women to ask themselves whether their partner goes to see other women, and if so, what does he do that he doesn’t do with them?”

But sex work’s threat — or its power, depending on how you look at it — runs even deeper than that. Emboldened sex workers represent a significant challenge to the current balance of power between men and women. If women are legally able to capitalise on their sexuality and the female body is no longer controlled by male-dominated governments, power will shift. The sex industry will go from a buyer’s market, if you will, to a seller’s.

“If women can make these choices for themselves,” says Chateaufort, “men no longer control the world.”

• • •

Amnesty International’s position remains unchanged. “The policy is still as it stood last year,” says a spokesperson for the organisation, and it

“will guide all future actions we take on this front.”

But the battle for sex workers’ rights is still an uphill one. In April 2016, France enacted legislation modelled on a Swedish law that criminalises buying, rather than selling, sex, though well-intentioned, it effectively stigmatises and pushes sex work further underground. Stateside, an August 2016 Department of Justice investigation of the Baltimore Police Department found that some officers had targeted “people involved in the sex trade . . . to coerce sexual favours from them.” Similar acts were discovered during a scandal involving the Oakland Police Department and an underage prostitute in June of the same year.

Lawmakers seem to be aware of the problem but unable to find solutions. A bill that California legislators introduced last year would have allowed individual police officers to decide whether to send prostitutes to jail or offer them counselling, advancing the assumption that they need either mental health care or a prison cell instead of access to the same support systems as other workers in the state.

It took Schulz a while to come around to Amnesty International’s point of view, but after learning about the experiences of sex workers around the world — from Kenya to Thailand to the UK to Canada — the choice became clear.

“This is my personal view,” she says. “You can’t on the one hand say that every woman has the right to decide whether or not to have children, to decide about the spacing of the birth of their children, to decide on an abortion, and on the other hand say that no woman can decide for herself to engage in whichever activity she decides to engage in. There is an element of autonomy that I have recognised. Who am I to say this is a choice they should not have?” ■



Marchers at 2014’s International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers, a global event since 2003



VICTOR KERLOW



Playboy Advisor

Columnist Bridget Phetasy on cheating with camgirls. Plus, advice for a guy obsessed with manscaping and a lesson for all in upping your game between the sheets



Q: *I'm in an exclusive relationship. Would it be considered cheating if I paid to watch a camgirl when my girlfriend isn't around? Essentially, I see it as being the same as watching porn by myself — and that's definitely not cheating, in my opinion. But I've heard differing opinions when it comes to interacting with camgirls.— EC*

A: If I had a dollar for every time someone asked me “Is X considered cheating?” in the digital era, I'd be JK Rowling rich. Honestly, it doesn't matter what you think “in your opinion.” It's her opinion that counts. If you feel you need to hide your desire for something you do when she's not around, that's a strong sign she won't be cool with it. What's considered “cheating” should always be defined by the couple,



not by the individuals, so you need to discuss this with your partner. Camgirls differ from porn in many respects, but mainly, the level of interaction and intimacy, especially if you pay for a private performance, is different from that of adult videos. In terms of the access you get when you buy a private show, the camgirl experience can feel more like being in a strip club. For many women, that's not okay, but some are cool with it. It all depends on the boundaries you set together. If you haven't had the talk, I suggest you get to communicating. And finally, know that camboys have their own thriving industry, so if you spend time with a camgirl, permit your girlfriend the same freedom.

Q: *I've been dating someone long distance for almost a year and we see each other about twice a month. He recently made the decision to move closer "for us," as he puts it. Now the conversation has shifted toward whether we should live together when he arrives or each have our own place while he acclimates to a new city. I think he should rent a one-bedroom that I can move into down the road, he wants to live together right away. Thoughts?* — SM

A: Whether you realise it or not, your answer is in your question. You already know what you want to do, and my thought is that you need to honour that instinct and insist on living separately when he first arrives so he can establish his own life. Otherwise you may end up feeling suffocated or realise you aren't ready for the responsibility and restrictions of cohabiting with someone who's fresh off the boat and suddenly dependent on you. To go from seeing each other twice a month to living together is a pretty drastic change. You're right to want to see how the relationship progresses once you're both in the same town. Sometimes, a long distance arrangement is the perfect solution for those of us who, because of our work, are too busy to devote the proper attention to a full-time partner but still want intimacy and love. Your boyfriend also needs to make sure his decision isn't all about you and that he has other interests to pursue in the unfortunate event that things don't work out. Putting that kind of pressure on a relationship is almost always a recipe for resentment and hurt. It generally doesn't end well when someone makes a huge life change — like moving from one city to another — "for us" instead of "for me," because the person making the change comes with

expectations that are often too lofty for his or her significant other to live up to. Nine times out of 10, when someone moves here for a partner, it ends in disaster. (Apologies for the ice cold dose of reality.) I suggest you have a heart-to-heart. Hopefully he'll understand that you're also only trying to do what's best "for us" in the long run.

Q: *I recently started taking Zoloft and have noticed a huge decline in my libido, which my doctor warned is a side effect for new users. The last time I had sex, I couldn't finish. Afterwards, I was conflicted about saving myself from embarrassment by telling her the truth — thereby admitting to someone I don't know very well that I've been depressed — or just passing it off as nerves. If it happens again, should I tell my sex partner the truth or just swallow my pride?* — JR

A: If it happens again with a stranger, just swallow your pride. You aren't obligated to tell every one you might stand that you're on antidepressants. If it happens again with the same woman, however, tell her the truth. Personally, I'd rather know your "nerves" are due to SSRI-induced erectile dysfunction as opposed to free-floating performance anxiety. Women worry about pleasing their man just as much as men should worry about pleasing a woman. If you can't finish, most women will wonder if it's because of them. (I know I would.) But if I'm aware you're on Zoloft, I won't take it personally.

Q: *I have a phobia of body hair, both on my partners and on myself, that has made dating difficult. Most women will remove all their body hair once our relationship starts. But I need to remove all of mine below my neck, and the women I've dated find this weird. Have you ever met another guy like me? Is it wrong to expect a woman to understand my preference?* — CH

A: To answer your first question: No, I've never met a man with that phobia. I wish. They've all been hairy motherfuckers. It sounds like cataphobia (fear of hair) to me, but I'm not licensed to diagnose you, it's above my pay grade. My suggestion is to see a therapist who can help you get to the root of your phobia. You can't expect a woman to understand something you don't comprehend yourself. The better you can articulate the reasons for your preference, the more likely you'll be able to find a woman who will empathise.

Q: *When it comes to sex, a lot of women say they want an experienced lover. But what constitutes an experienced lover, and how can I become one if women won't give me a shot?* — LS

A: Ah yes, an age-old catch-22. There's no way to learn how to drive a car other than by driving a car. An experienced lover could be someone who has driven a lot of cars in varying conditions or someone who has driven one car they know really well. But first you have to get that permit, right? The key to becoming an experienced lover is finding a woman you trust and with whom you can explore the boundaries of your sexuality — and hers. First things first: Be realistic. Are you pursuing the right woman, or are you fixating on ones who are out of your league? Are you attracted to narcissistic attention whores and ignoring sweet women who show interest in you? I'm not saying abandon your standards, but when you're in the recon phase of the sexual wilderness, flirting with different shapes, sizes and colours of women who aren't necessarily your type can render a lot of valuable information about the opposite sex. Second, stop acting like a victim. You aren't doing yourself any favours by thinking you're an amateur. Chemistry is what attracts a woman, but confidence is what keeps her attention. So fake it till you make it, baby, and educate yourself on female anatomy and psychology. Many adult sex shops offer classes loaded with tips and tricks for becoming a fantastic lover. You don't even need a partner to attend. If revisiting sex ed is too intimidating, the internet can help. For example, the website

OMGYes.com has turned vaginal stimulation into a game. YouTube has given a young generation of "sexperts" a platform for video tutorials on everything from online dating to cunnilingus to BDSM. Knowledge is power. Just as you should read up on the rules of the road before getting behind the wheel, learning will give you an advantage many men don't have. Finally, most women aren't looking for a porn star in bed. I know a lot of men who have plenty of notches on their belt but are selfish assholes who suck in the sack. We're looking for a man who's interested in what makes us tick. There's no magic formula that works on every woman. Instead, we're attracted to those determined to find the perfect combination of licking and flicking that makes our clits swell and our eyes roll to the back of our heads. The man who can make us orgasm because he knows our bodies intimately. And that, my friend, requires no experience — just attentiveness and curiosity. Questions? E-mail advisor@playboy.com.

ILLUSTRATION BY ZOHAR LAZAR



FOOD

ALL HAIL THE NEO TACO

*This super savoury
version from chef Ray
Garcia redefines the genre*

BEET PIBIL TACOS

Ray Garcia, mastermind behind LA's B.S. Taqueria and Broken Spanish, makes a vegan taco delicious enough to convert a carnivore

Serves six

1½ tsp annatto seeds
¾ tbsp dried Mexican oregano
¼ tsp cumin seeds
¼ tsp allspice
¼ tsp black peppercorns
1 tbsp vegetable oil
250ml water
4 oz coconut vinegar
120ml distilled white vinegar
120ml fresh orange juice
Salt to taste
1 medium white onion, peeled and quartered
1 habanero chili, de-stemmed
12 yellow beets, peeled
Corn tortillas
Garnish: arugula, baby kale, pickled onions, mustard greens, mustard seeds

Grind spices in spice mill until smooth. In large pot, heat thin layer of oil over medium heat. Add ground spices and cook two minutes, stirring constantly. Add liquids and salt and bring to simmer. Add onion, habanero and beets, cover tightly with aluminium foil, and lid, and cook over medium low heat until tender, two to three hours. Remove beets from liquid and let cool. In blender, combine remaining liquid, onion, habanero and two beets, and blend until smooth. Pass through fine strainer and set aside. Toss remaining beets in oil, place on sheet pan, season with salt, and roast in 200 degree oven until deeply caramelised. Slice beets, place on tortillas, drizzle with blended sauce, and garnish.







DRINKS

SHERRY SHAKES IT UP

Top bartenders and restaurateurs are reviving and reinventing the Spanish wine

If you want to know what everyone will be drinking next, ask your favourite bartender what he or she is into right now. Perhaps because they deal with the standard spirits at work, professional mixers tend to pick less-common libations when they drink for fun. And lately those libations lean toward sherry, a fortified wine from the Jerez region, at the southern tip of Spain. What makes sherry stand out is an ageing process that creates unique flavours. With the solera method, the wine ages by passing through a series of barrels that are never completely emptied. Lighter varieties finos and manzanillas age under flor, a layer of yeast that prevents oxidation and leads to a dry, citrusy and bright flavour, while oloroso sherries, which don't have flor, display nutty, cooked-fruit notes thanks to interacting with oxygen. (Amontillado sherry splits the difference, ageing for some time with flor and some time without.) There's also Pedro Ximénez (usually called PX), a very sweet style named for the grape it's made from.

"The first sip, I fell in love," says Washington DC bar professional Derek Brown of his introduction to sherry in a cocktail a decade ago. "The depth of flavour, the layers—it was unique. It's like getting a song stuck in your head. I wanted to learn everything about it." One of the capital's most famous mixologists, Brown operates four bars, including Mockingbird Hill, which specialises in sherry and opened in 2013 with more than 60 bottles on the menu. As Chief Spirits Advisor to the National Archives Foundation ("I'm the highest-ranking bartender in the federal government," he jokes), Brown cites sherry's long history in America. The founding fathers and their contemporaries sucked down gallons

of sherry, port and madeira back in the 18th century. And a top cocktail of the 19th century was the sherry cobbler, a refreshing mix of sherry, sugar and fruit served over crushed ice that was beloved in part because its low alcohol content allowed imbibers to drink it all day long. Today, with low-ABV cocktails back in vogue, David Rosoff of Bar Moruno in downtown LA recommends a new version of the classic cobbler. His Grand Central Market

spot has an extensive list of sherries that go well with the Spanish North African flavours on the menu. "Sherry is a natural for a low-ABV cocktail, whether you want salinity with a fino or sweetness with a PX," Rosoff says. Also, to put it less technically, less alcohol means you can drink more. *Jason Horn*



González Byass
Alfonso oloroso sherry
Portland bartender and writer Jacob Grier uses this oloroso for a perversely primitive drink known as the bone luge, which involves drinking the sherry through a hollow roasted marrow bone. It offers intense flavours of oak, hazelnut, dried fig — and roasted marrow bone.

PX OLD FASHIONED

by *Derek Brown, Mockingbird Hill, Washington, DC*

Brown uses PX sherry in place of sugar in an otherwise traditional old-fashioned to create a more complex and fruity cocktail.

INGREDIENTS

60ml bourbon (such as Benson's Green River or Bee Meade Sherry Cask Finish)

8ml Pedro Ximénez sherry (such as Williams & Humbert collecton Don Zorlo Pedro Ximénez 12 years old)
1 dash aromatic bitters
Glass: old-fashioned
Garnish: orange twist

Add bourbon, sherry and bitters to a mixing glass filled with ice. Stir, then strain into an old-fashioned glass containing one large ice cube.
Garnish with orange twist.

SHERRY COBBLER

by *David Rosoff, Los Angeles*

Rosoff's twist on the classic sherry cobbler (pictured at right) combines nutty oloroso sherry with rich Irish whiskey, bitter amaro Montenegro and a bright grapefruit liqueur.

INGREDIENTS

1 strawberry
1 tsp sugarcane syrup
75ml oloroso sherry

15ml Irish whiskey
15ml amaro Montenegro
15ml combier crème de pamplemousse rose liqueur
Glass: wine
Garnish: strawberry, grapefruit wedge and powdered sugar

In wineglass, gently muddle strawberry and sugarcane syrup. Add remaining ingredients, fill glass with crushed ice and stir. Garnish with strawberry, grapefruit wedge and powdered sugar.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRANT CORNETT



THE GLOBAL EXPLORER'S GUIDE FOR 2017

*You've visited the world's greatest
ready-made for the taste-making*

PORTLAND, MAINE

Portland is the new Portland

Discussions of which up-and-coming American city is the "new Port" and seem ironically to ignore the obvious: the original Portland. Friendly, diverse and easily navigable, this New England town is equal parts old-school charm and modern sensibility. In spring and summer, the Portland Sea Dogs play at Haddock Field, one of the best minor-league stadiums in the country, complete with a replica of Fenway's Green Monster. Good spots for steamed clams

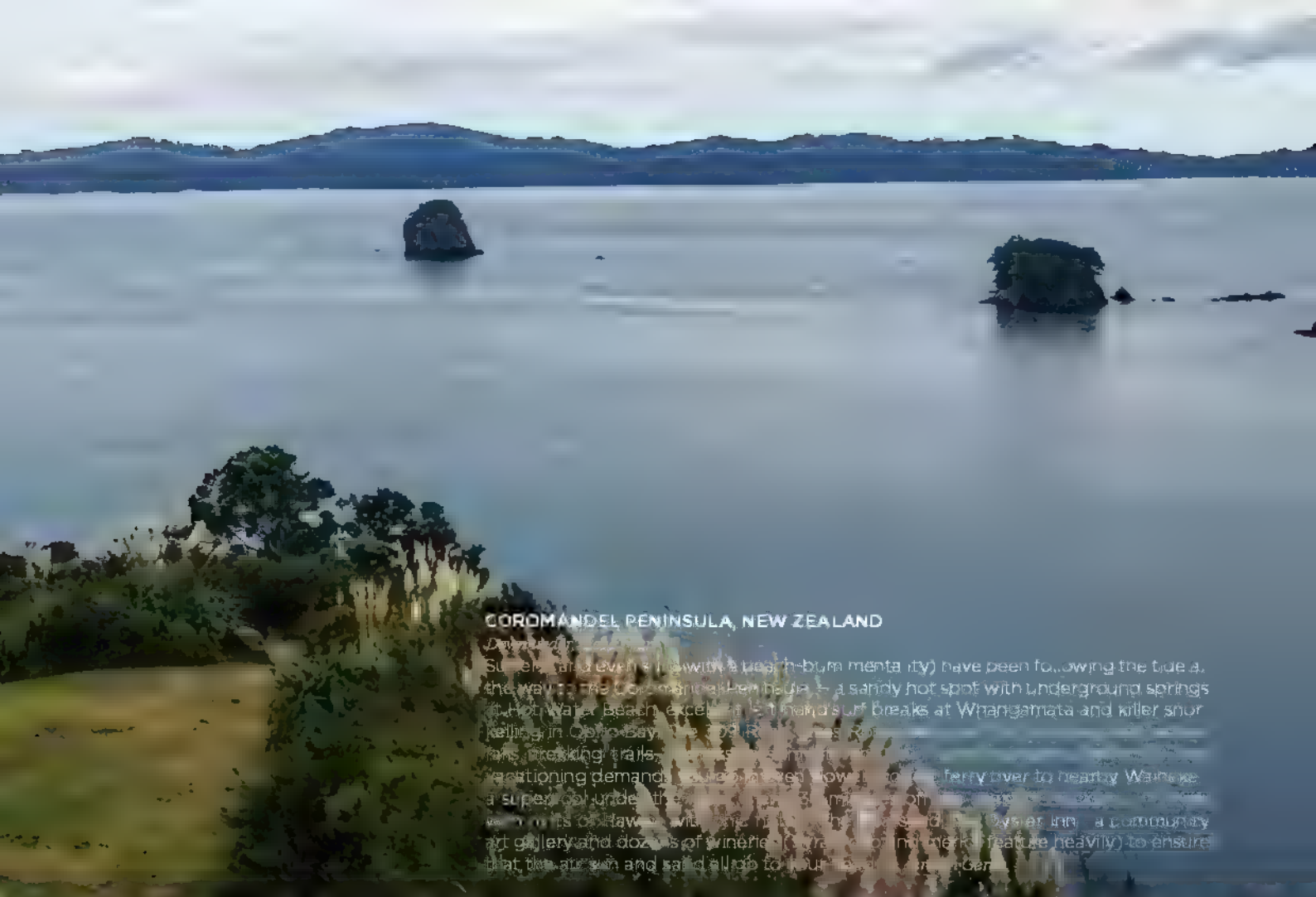
and lobster rolls naturally abound, but you'd be well advised to stop at the Honey Paw for Asian-inspired comfort food such as Korean fried chicken with corn bread and tagalong with roasted chicken ragu. End the night at Vena's Fizz House, a combination mixology shop and cocktail bar where the bow-tied bartenders are happy to create a drink to your specifications. Portland is dead, long live Portland. —*Jeremy Freed*



PARIS

Eat better for less in the City of Light

It's an open secret that the Paris food and drink scene had gone stale in recent decades. Now, an embrace of farm-to-table cooking, natural wines and the cocktail revolution have made the city an exciting culinary destination again. The best deals in Le Marais at the oldest covered market in town, Marché des Enfants Rouges. At Chez Alain, Mam Mam, a silver-haired man wearing a who-the-fuck-is-Shawn-Carter T-shirt will make you a delicious Comté and ham sandwich for just eight euros. For dinner, hit Le Verre Voilé, a tiny wine shop-restaurant that serves rustic fare, including Normandy beef atop bean salad and whole shrimp tossed in oil. After dinner, head to Pasdeoup restaurant for a nightcap. Tucked in the back is one of Paris's best cocktail bars, helmed by American expat Amanda Boucher, who mixes stellar drinks both classic and new. —*Jeremy Repanich*



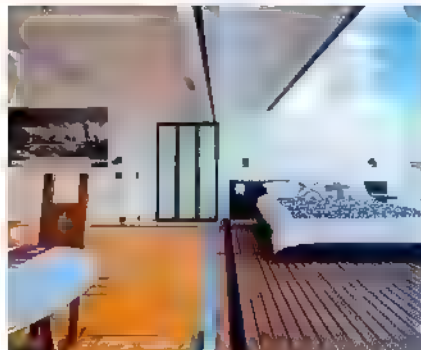
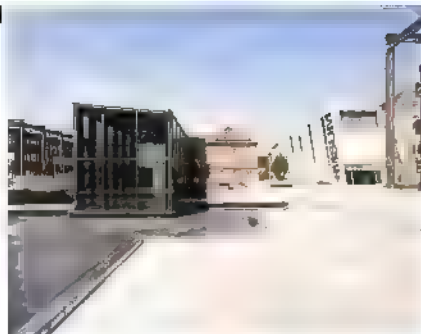
COROMANDEL PENINSULA, NEW ZEALAND

Down the peninsula (and even a few with a post-humorous mentality) have been following the tide at the way to the Coromandel Peninsula—a sandy hot spot with underground springs at Hot Water Beach, excellent fishing and surf breaks at Whangamata and killer snorkeling in Ohiwa Bay. It's a good idea to take a ferry over to nearby Waiheke, a super cool under-the-water world of marine life. The island is a good place to visit in its own right, with one of the best beaches in the world. Whether in a community art gallery and dozens of wineries, the island is a good place to visit in its own right. The island is a good place to visit in its own right. The island is a good place to visit in its own right.

LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

Re-use your imagination

The European Grand Tour is old news. You've outgrown Ibiza; you've done a stint in Berlin. Maybe you're itching to find the cool kids in which case you should follow the graffiti all the way to Ljubljana. As the city snakes off its Eastern Bloc vibe, the mood is one of radical excitement. The living is good and cheap, the food is wild (deer tartare, bear paw) and the wine scene is strong. Dvornik Bar is a good place to start your education in the local varieties. Street art of the Banksy kind is public and vibrant. Old buildings have been given new life at venues such as Stara Elektrarna, a former power station that now hosts live shows and Metekova, a barracks turned modern art museum. A stay at Vander Urban Resort in the heart of the city will do you right with its clean, spare, modern rooms, strong coffee and superfast wifi. Signs that the chic millennial traveler is here to stay. —*Jeralyn Gerba*



MEXICO CITY

America's hippest destination may be south of the border

Decked out with bonafide raw concrete and immaculate mid-century modern furniture, Xaman Bar could be the hottest new s'mores spot in New York or Tokyo. The cocktail list, however, is quintessentially Mexico City. Like the drinks, which fuse Mexican botanica's with top-shelf gin and mezcal, this chaotic metropolis excels at combining the traditional with the modern and cosmopolitan. At La Valse, a three-suite designer hotel set amid the coffee bars and streetwear shops of Roma Norte, the rooftop option features vintage furniture and a bed on rails that slides out onto a private terrace. A short walk away at Contramar, the raw namach tostadas with avocado and spicy mayo are a brilliant marriage of Mexican and Japanese. Save room for a late-night torta, Mexico City's preeminent street snack. —*Jeremy Freed*



AUTO

A WORLD-CLASS JAPANESE SUPERCAR BY ANY NAME

You could call it Godzilla or the Skyline, but definitely call the Nissan GT-R amazing



It was around the third or fourth turn, as I cornered the 2017 Nissan GT-R on a tight canyon road high above the cliffs of Malibu, that it hit me. This thing is utterly mind-boggling. Not in the purely figurative sense, but mind-boggling in a literal way that leaves one open to the possibility that, just maybe, there's some mysterious place in the universe where mind can control matter. Such is the power of the latest iteration of the famed Japanese car also known by the nickname Godzilla. Fans of the massively popular and pioneering driving video game Gran Turismo may also know earlier models of the GT-R as the Skyline, which partially explains why I caught so many Los Ange-

les millennials drooling over the car. This wasn't my first time driving a GT-R. I recall trying to contain my excitement after tackling a few Michigan back roads in the outgoing model some years ago. But the 2017 GT-R is far more exhilarating.

Much of that can be credited to a stiffer frame, which improves the car's handling in situations that call for tricky maneuvering. The GT-R's award-winning twin-turbo 3.8-litre V6 engine has also increased by 20 horsepower, for a total of 421kW, which allows for quicker acceleration when you hammer down on the gas pedal. All that power is perfectly balanced by one of the most revolutionary all-wheel-drive systems

in the game, leading to unparalleled confidence on the road. The GT-R's six-speed dual-clutch transmission has been refined for smoother shifting in normal city driving, but it's clear that the beast is most comfortable revving at higher speeds.

Cosmetically, the 2017 GT-R has an entirely overhauled face and hood, redesigned to improve the car's overall performance. And the interior has undergone upgraded modifications as well, including a new dashboard and an eight-inch touch screen, creating a more premium luxury feel. Still, it's the intoxicating, thrilling feeling I get when pushing the GT-R through a wicked turn that sells me on the idea that there's so much more to this supercar than its sheer power. — Marcus Amick

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHANTAL ANDERSON

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P C P A L A C E



INTERVIEW

BILLY BOB THORNTON

The tattoos alone tell a wild story. All those cherubs and arrowed hearts adorning Billy Bob Thornton's razor sharp frame are like an illuminated manuscript on love, loss and squirrely good times. NOTHIN' DOIN', scripted on his left biceps, is the name of a party band he played with in the 1970s. The magic mushroom on his right calf celebrates his beloved Allman Brothers and Lord knows what else. Thornton's kids (he has four by three women) leave their marks too, as does Connie Angland, his current wife. Mrs. Billy Bob number six. The most striking is a vibrant angel in the crook of his left arm, shedding blood red leaves. It now reads PEACE, though it once spelt ANGELINA. "That was probably the most painful one to ink," Thornton says.

Here's a little show-business secret: Some of our finest character actors are absolute bores off-screen. We're talking celebrated Oscar winners you wouldn't want to share a cab with. There's no such disappointment with Thornton. He's tackled wide-ranging roles in movies such as *Sling Blade*, *Friday Night Lights*, *A Simple Plan* and *Armageddon*, and he's every bit as riveting when he's sitting straight across from you. The intensity, the oddness, the feeling that he'll forever be an outsider—it's downright mesmerizing. And contagious. You feel his influence in the brooding backwoods banter of Matthew McConaughey's Rustin Cohle character from the first season of *True Detective* and in Bradley Cooper's emotional transparency in *American Sniper*. Existentialist torment with a country twang—that's Thornton.

In the past two years alone, Thornton has worked on more than a dozen films and television shows, including *Our Brand Is Crisis*, *Bad Santa 2* (out this holiday season), FX's *Fargo* and David E. Kelley's new legal drama, *Goliath*, on Amazon. His return to the ever-shifting ground of TV (one of his earliest roles was a bit part on *Matlock*) is resulting in some of his best work yet.

Billy Bob Thornton is his real name, bestowed on him August 4, 1955. His father, Billy Ray, was a high school history teacher and basketball coach, and his mother, Vir-

gina—who is Native American, English and Spanish—worked at the telephone company and as a psychic. Thornton spent much of his childhood at the backwoods house his maternal grandparents owned in rural Alpine, Arkansas. They ate whatever his grandfather caught, which meant squirrel and possum on good nights. The family later moved to Malvern, where Thornton got into theatre, rock and roll, baseball, drugs and girls. Adversity was never far. His father beat him, and a younger brother died of heart failure at the age of 30.

The gauzy cinematic breakthrough scene happened after Thornton kicked his worst habits and moved to Los Angeles. He was working as a waiter at a show-business party when he encountered *Some Like It Hot* director Billy Wilder, who encouraged him to write screenplays. "He told me, 'Everybody's an actor,'" Thornton recalls. "What we need are better stories." Wilder's words pushed Thornton to focus on the scripts he'd been toying with. A short film he wrote about a mentally disabled Arkansas man who murders his mother and her lover led the way to *Sling Blade*. The 1996 film earned Thornton, who also stars in it, an Academy Award nomination for best actor and the Oscar for best adapted screenplay. He has been a household name ever since.

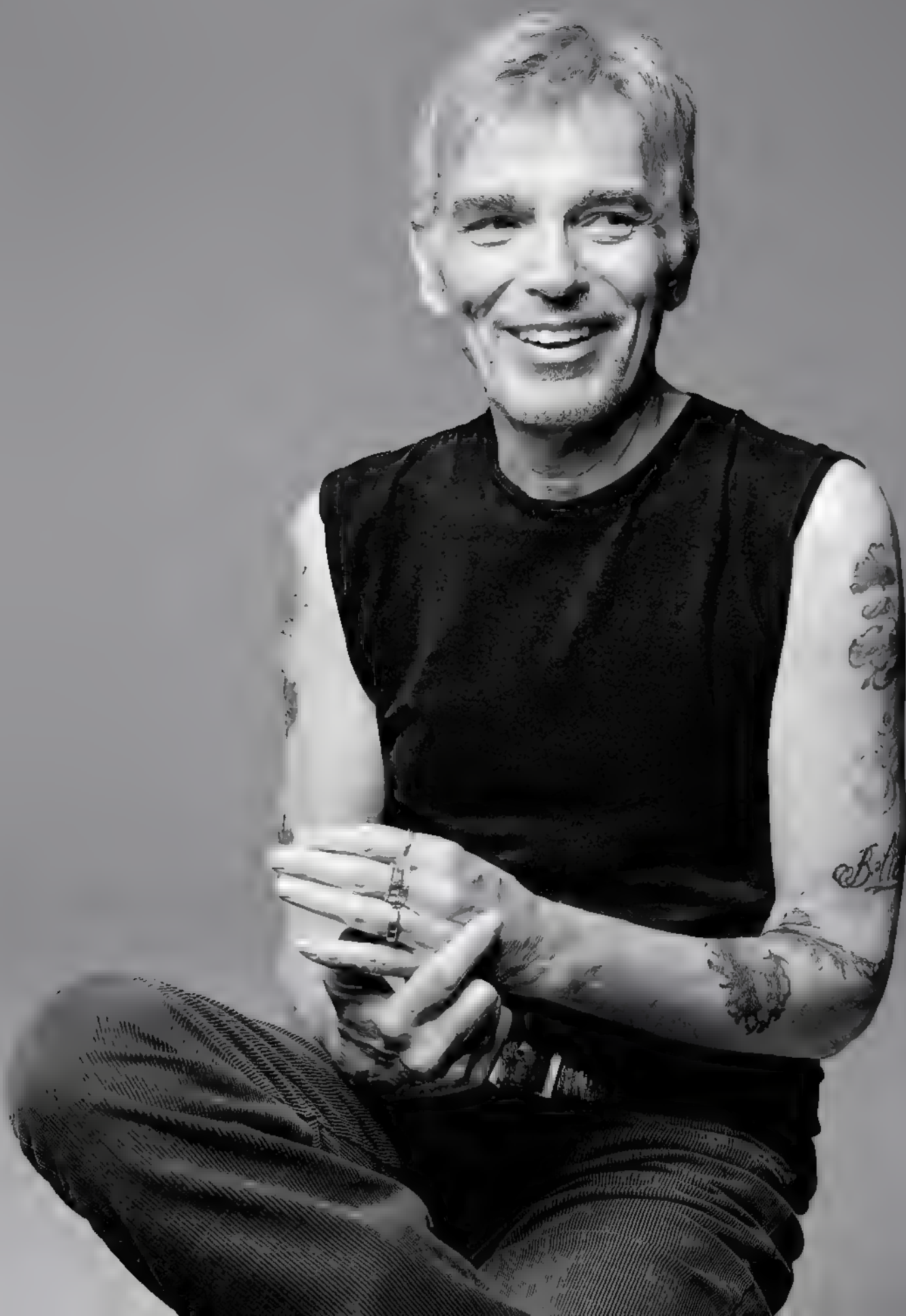
Contributing Editor **David Hochman**,

who interviewed Kevin Hart for the October *Playboy* interview, has known Thornton for more than 20 years. "I saw a very early screening of *Sling Blade* and said, 'I need to know more about this guy,'" Hochman says. "We've sat down for some very deep and wonderful conversations over the years. This time, we met at the Sunset Marquis, where Thornton lived on and off for six years from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. 'Dwight Yoakam's joke was that every time I got a divorce, I lived here,' he told me, 'which was pretty often.' After all this time, and whether he's talking women, booze, political correctness or his famous OCD, he's still got that twinkle in the eye and a radical way of sharing that makes you go, 'Billy, you did not just say those words.'"

PLAYBOY: It's been more than a decade since you helped set the Hollywood F-word record for a Christmas film with the original *Bad Santa*. Are you still saying "Fuck the fuck off" in front of the children?

THORNTON: Yeah. This one may better that record depending on how they edit the thing. I would say this movie is more emotional and has more of a human story than the original. My character, Willie, was just an abused kid who grew up bitter and sour because of it. Despite his salty tongue, he has a heart. He's a hero to a lot of people,

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DAN MONICK**





INTERVIEW

talking about the commercialism of the holiday and all that. But yeah, the material is still very funny and definitely fucking filthy.

PLAYBOY: How's the man under the dirty beard holding up?

THORNTON: That's a bigger question. I guess I feel older in the sense that the character would feel older. My youth is behind me. I'm a veteran now. In the old days, if the character saw a pretty girl on the street, he would be more likely to go up to her than he would be now. Now he's a little more tired and a bit more mature. I can relate to that. I think I'm over the stupid shit people do and say to you. Now it's like, "Just get out of my face." I've been in this business for around 30 years at this point. I've done pretty much everything you can do. I've been at every level of success and failure and disappointment and joy and humiliation and heartbreak. It's not like I'm going to do something that will thrill me other than doing some good work as an artist and being with my kids. Those are the two things. I think I'm more stable, more focused, more comfortable with myself. It's kind of like I was on a train for years and I just got off at a stop I liked. So now it's just, Okay, I'm going to settle down here.

PLAYBOY: That sounds downright sane for a guy who has always talked about being a weirdo.

THORNTON: I don't know if it's that I'm sane or just older and wiser. You get to a point where you don't want to put up with any more shit. I've always been really co-dependent. I still am to a large degree, but now I don't mind telling people I'm not going to do this or that. There were times when that wasn't the case. Say a director wanted me to do something that was against my instincts. I used to do it anyway. These days I'll just say, "I think this dialogue is bad. Why is this scene so shitty? This doesn't make sense in the story." It's the same with people. I'll say, "Tell that asshole over there he's not going to manipulate everybody." If somebody knows more than I do, I'm delighted. I don't want to be the smartest guy in the room. But if I get the feeling you don't know where to put

the camera, I'm sure as hell going to say something.

PLAYBOY: You've admitted you were drinking during the shooting of the original *Bad Santa*. Did you apply the Method acting technique to this one too?

THORNTON: Not in the same way. On the first *Bad Santa*, I was kind of living the life of that guy. I was having way too much fun. I'm a million times tamer now. I'll have a light beer or two every few weeks, and the next morning it will feel like I have a sinus headache. When I was doing the original film, that was one of the only carefree times in my life. I mean, I've never allowed myself to be truly happy since my brother died in 1988, but that period in the early 2000s was pretty fucking great. I was doing

I'm still, at 61, exactly like I was in high school. The popular kids don't equate with me.

great movies with anybody I wanted — *The Man Who Wasn't There*, *Monster's Ball*, *Bad Santa*. There were a lot of great people around. It was movie-star time.

PLAYBOY: Those were the Angelina Jolie years. Looking back, could you have made that relationship work?

THORNTON: Ultimately, no. I think we could have lasted a couple more years, maybe five more, but I kind of blew it with her.

PLAYBOY: How did you blow it?

THORNTON: I don't know. I always felt beneath her, and if you're living a life with someone you feel you're beneath, that's not good for either of you. Angie and I are still friends. That won't ever go away. We don't talk on a regular basis, sometimes I won't

see her for five years. But I offer. I know she's been through a lot. "If you ever need to talk, if you ever need anything..." She knows that. She's a great person. And she's one of the people who didn't abandon me. She never has.

PLAYBOY: What do you mean by "abandon" you?

THORNTON: Well, my relationship with the show-business world is that generally I feel apart from it. I mean, I was accidentally or just a situational victim of it a couple of times, but I've never been much of a part of Hollywood. I don't have any friends in Hollywood. I have friends in Los Angeles, though. One guy is a carpenter who still goes to theatre groups and is working on short films and stuff. I have one friend who

lives in Oregon in a hut. The guys in my band are my friends. Dwight Yoakam has been my best friend for years and years and is still just that. We're all busy, though. He and I won't see each other for six months. It's always been the same. Outside of that, I'm not part of that whole rat pack. I was a guy people used to look up to, but they sort of dropped me like a hot rock.

PLAYBOY: Who are you thinking about?

THORNTON: Well, I can't say, because I don't talk about my enemies. I can't do it. I'm talking about various actors, mostly. Most of them were either slightly younger or a decade younger than me. For a while I was the senior

member of a group of them, and I was the guy they always wanted to be around. They would ask me to write them a script, or they wanted to be in something I was directing, or they wanted to be in a movie with me. We all hung out here at the Sunset Marquis or the Whiskey Bar. I've reached out to them, and it's like, "Hey, man, so good to hear from you." But then I don't hear from them anymore. I mean, it puzzles me. I assume part of it is my doing. I have things like obsessive-compulsive disorder and dyslexia that cause certain behaviour that can come across a little like Asperger's. But still, I've felt hurt a few times, because I came up with those guys. There are a handful I still hear from who I really appreciate. Bill Paxton checks in. I



INTERVIEW

love him, always will. Bruce Willis checks in, and Dennis Quaid. We're good friends. Kevin Costner and Dwight, of course. John Cusack keeps up with me. Other than that, I'm not close with anybody in the movie business. I'm not part of a clique. I'm just like I was in school. I was an outcast in school. I hung out with a bunch of nerdy kids and bad guys. I was with the music geeks and the guys who smoked by the incinerator. I didn't belong in either of those worlds completely, but I sure didn't belong in the popular-kid world. I'm still, at 61 years old, exactly like I was in high school. The popular kids still don't equate with me. But I guess one thing that has really changed is I'm no longer envious.

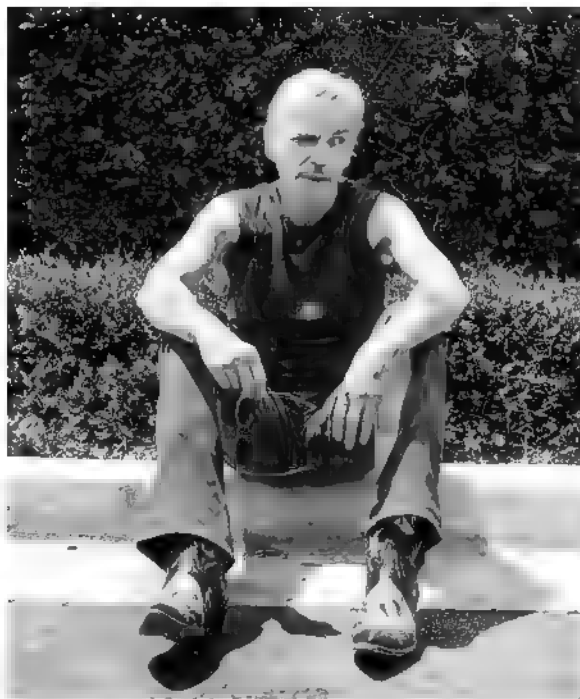
PLAYBOY: You've made tons of good movies. You have an Oscar. What were you envious of?

THORNTON: Maybe that the handsome star guys got the big parts based on their popularity and looks. I've always known who I am as an actor. I think probably one of the most important things you can have as an actor is knowing who you are. I have friends who don't work like they ought to because they insist they're Clark Gable, and they're not. I always knew I wasn't Clark Gable, but I still had feelings inside that would create some jealousy or envy or whatever. Not that I ever expressed those feelings, really. I always appreciated other actors, and I loved my friends. Fortunately, these days it never crosses my mind what else is going on out there. I don't care who's starring in what. I really don't. I focus on whatever it is that I'm doing right now.

PLAYBOY: That sounds like a personal breakthrough.

THORNTON: My daughter Bella had a lot to do with it. She's 12, and she's a kid who desperately needs her father as a friend, not just as a father. She and I have so many things in common. We connect on some kind of magical level. I'm there for her, and

she knows that. In a larger sense, I'm okay with the overall direction of my life. I have faith that things are going to pan out okay. That's not to say you don't get thrown for left turns. My life in particular has had a lot of those. Some of the people I know, their lives are pretty much the same as they were 20 years ago. But mine has had high notes, low notes and everything in between. I'm just drawn to a certain type of intensity, I guess. I think it's an uncontrollable appetite for life. I can't get rid of that passion, just like I can't get rid of certain neuroses.



You just have to make peace with them.

PLAYBOY: Your phobias are more famous than some of your ex-wives. Are you still apprehensive about antique furniture and Komodo dragons?

THORNTON: Put it this way. I still have a lot of eccentricities, and I embrace them all. I figure if you've got them, just live with them. As long as it doesn't hurt people, you're okay. For instance, I'm often late for things because I've had to drive around the block more times than I should have. I have to do it like three times or the world's going to fall apart. It's part of that

lifetime struggle of having OCD. I used to watch the clock to see when my dad was going to come home. When I was younger than my daughter is now, probably when I was 10 or so, I would start looking at the clock. If my dad was supposed to be home at 3:30, at 3:25 I would say, "If I can count to 100 20 times before I hear the car pull in the driveway, everything will be okay." They say that for a lot of people who have OCD, that's part of it. It's a way to control your environment, whether it's imaginary or not.

PLAYBOY: Anxiety is a big issue for you.

THORNTON: I have terrible anxiety issues. Mine are all up here swimming around all the time. I have anxiety over specific things sometimes, but usually I'll get these attacks of anxiety that come out of nowhere. I'll get a really rapid heartbeat, numbness in some part of the body, a feeling of disconnection, everything looking like it has a white film over it. And trouble breathing, your diaphragm getting right up under your rib cage. You can breathe in your lungs, but you can't get a full breath. It can happen in a social situation when somebody comes up to me and I don't know what to say. But what's ironic is, I'm great in an actual emergency situation. I'm not afraid of anything then. I'm usually the one in charge if somebody, let's say, at work runs into the wall in a harness and gets injured. I'm usually the one that's like, "Shut the fuck up.

You get over there. Let me do this. Unhook him." I'm good in those situations. I can come to the rescue both emotionally and physically for people. Whatever I went through growing up, it helped me with certain crisis situations. I may weigh 137 pounds, but I still have the hillbilly in me, anxieties and all.

PLAYBOY: There are therapies and medications that can help ease these burdens. Have you tried any of them?

THORNTON: I've never taken anything for it. I think it's part of what makes you what you are as an artist. I don't know. I



INTERVIEW

don't personally go for therapy, because it's kind of like people in Alcoholics Anonymous sometimes I think AA is a great thing to get people sober, but then the behaviour afterwards sometimes doesn't change. In addition to that behaviour, you now have this anger and nervousness that was held down by the drug or the alcohol, and then there becomes this very judgmental part of them. I think sometimes people in therapy... Look, I don't want to get into that hornet's nest. I think therapy is good for people it works for, and I think AA is good for people it works for. I'm saying don't use it against everybody else in your life. Sometimes when people are in these therapy or group situations, they come out as a little higher and mightier than everybody else. You develop this personality where you're willing to change everybody else's world just so yours works.

PLAYBOY: You don't like people telling you what to do.

THORNTON: Exactly right. If you've made a change for yourself, that's fine, but then don't tell me I need to quit smoking. There was a guy I worked with not too long ago who, every day when I was hanging out in the naughty corner — me and a couple of the other bad kids — he would come by and go, "If you ever want to stop that stuff, I know a guy I have a person." It's like, I really don't give a shit. I don't care how many guys you've got. I know you quit this and that and the other. That's fine. But don't go around promoting it. I'm not bothering you with my shit. That's why I go in the corner. So just leave me in my corner.

We live in a society that's increasingly mean-spirited and judgmental. I'm probably more open-minded than I've ever been even though I grew up as a hippie and a real liberal guy. Still, I find myself moving a little closer to the centre over certain things. Like I'm not a fan of political correctness.

PLAYBOY: You're not alone in that. But isn't political correctness intended to offer protection to the marginalised and the oppressed?

THORNTON: I was thinking about this the other day. I grew up in the South during segregation. I experienced separate drink-

ing fountains as a little kid. When the Civil Rights Act was passed, I was old enough to know what was going on. We've sure made leaps and bounds as a country, but on another level, the divide is greater than it was then. We're more separate than we've ever been, and there are problems we've never gotten over. Is political correctness helping? In some ways, no. Artistically, I think things are worse. In this age of technology we've come a long way, but in a lot of ways we've gone really backward. I know this is going to make me sound like a dinosaur, but in my generation, the watermark was higher for our culture. I grew up in an age when the musical bar was set by the Bea-

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ties. As actors, we all wanted to be Spencer Tracy or Marlon Brando or James Dean. That was the benchmark.

Now we live in a time when you can't say anything or do anything out of fear that you're going to offend someone. You can't take creative risks. I'm not saying everybody has to walk into a Robert Mapplethorpe exhibit and say, "Oh, this is lovely." But now, when you go to the movies, it's like anybody who does anything politically incorrect ends up being the bad guy who gets killed.

I want to be able to tell a joke. I want to be able to kid with my friends without somebody outside our group pointing their finger or wearing Earth Shoes and having a rally about it. That's the weird thing about some liberals, and I'm one of them, trust me. They'll go telling some other religion or lifestyle or whatever, "We're standing up for you." But that's not really their job.

In other words, if I have a gay friend who doesn't mind a joke, I want to be able to tell that joke. Don't you, a straight guy, come out of nowhere and interrupt me and my buddy and say, "That's not right."

PLAYBOY: So do you know any good jokes?

THORNTON: [Laughs] I can never remember any jokes, which is probably a good thing in this case.

PLAYBOY: Next question then. What was your toughest movie to make?

THORNTON: *A Simple Plan*, just because of the conditions. It was cold. Intense. That was real hard, and I loved every minute of it. But this movie I shot recently, *London*

Fields, was extremely hard to make, and I'm not sure anybody will ever see it. It's based on the Martin Amis book. There was a fight between the producers and the creative people about the cut. The two approaches were very different. I saw the director's cut, which I thought was a masterpiece, but it is probably going to be tied up for years and won't come out.

PLAYBOY: One thing already came out from that movie, which was the rumour this summer that you were sleeping with your *London Fields* co-star Amber Heard, something that allegedly sent her then husband, Johnny Depp, into

a jealous rage.

THORNTON: Here's what's ridiculous about that: It was not based in reality whatsoever. I was on tour with my band, just sitting in my chair, and had nothing to do with any part of that rumour. The whole thing not only was not true, but none of it even came close to happening. And yet there it was on the internet. A friend of mine calls me and goes, "Hey, did you see the news? They're claiming you're from Mars." Then it all begins. The press is calling your publicist, asking if you want to make a statement. No, I don't want to make a statement. This was a stupid made-up story. The problem is, these days all you have to do is say something, and it's true. Somebody makes an accusation — any accusation — and it sticks with you a little. Especially if it has anything to do with sex or something like that.

PLAYBOY: What should men know about



INTERVIEW

women?

THORNTON: First of all, when you look at a guy who has been married as many times as I have, I'm probably not the best expert. But then again, maybe I am. Either way, this is one thing I've learned. If you're with a woman and you're unfaithful to her one night at a restaurant on the bathroom sink, she'll usually get past that. Because you didn't have feelings. It was just some stupid thing you did. However, if you have feelings for a woman, even if you don't have a sexual relationship but you have love or romance, well, that means way more than fucking on the bathroom sink. With men, meanwhile, if your wife or girlfriend falls in love with another guy, men will somehow get past that. Guys will be okay. But I'm telling you, if she confesses to one time on the bathroom sink, shit! You are out the door! Guys are brought up almost as though sex is an athletic event. We weren't taught the romance. We were told you've got to be the best and the biggest and the strongest and the fastest, especially a guy like me, whose dad was a coach. Fortunately, I'm also a hopeless romantic. If my wife fell in love with someone, it would absolutely kill me, but I would understand her for it. The bathroom sink I wouldn't understand. I couldn't see her in the same way again.

PLAYBOY: You and Connie Angland, your daughter Bella's mother, have been together for more than a decade and have been married since 2014. Is she finally the one?

THORNTON: Yeah, I'm done. We're real. She's shown me how to enjoy stability and all that. She's truly got my best interests at heart. She doesn't need anything outside this life that we've built. Mostly, she knows who I am. She knows I'm not ever going to be the guy who's running around the world to exotic places. She loves to travel, but she knows I'm never going to be that guy. Angie knew that about me too. She knew I was never going to go live in Vietnam or

China or whatever and travel all over the world and fly to this country and that country. She knew I would never be that guy. She also knew that I wasn't going to be that involved in society.

I'm a bit of a hermit. I still like to stay up at night and sleep during the day. I'm not somebody who goes out to things. I'm a guy who's pretty content just staying home, watching the news or whatever.

PLAYBOY: You've been doing more tel-



evision in recent years. *Fargo* is a big cult hit, and now you have a new Amazon series, *Goliath*. Are you a binge watcher?

THORNTON: Not at all. If anything, I'll watch *Andy Griffith* and *Gomer Pyle* and *Hogan's Heroes* and all that. Or sports. I'm a baseball freak, and I love football too. So I watch sports and I watch the Smithsonian Channel because every now and then it will have something weird on. I'm terrified of flying, so I watch that show *Air Disasters*. Sometimes when you're afraid of something you can't help but get into it. I do a little of that. But no, I don't watch the current TV shows. I do understand that TV is the place to be right now. It was certainly enjoyable working on the recent pro-

jects I've done. I love the character I play on *Goliath*. I think we hit our stride about halfway through and realized what it was. The last three or four episodes are pretty amazing and intense.

PLAYBOY: Let's take a step back. What's your earliest memory?

THORNTON: My grandmother's front yard. It's where I spent my growing-up years, in a community called Alpine, Arkansas. The population was around 100.

The place was magical. It's where I started discovering the wonders of life. My grandmother Maude Faulkner was the matriarch. Everybody came to her little cabin for reunions and whatnot. And not only from my family; she was a figure for the whole community. Alpine was in a very backwoods place, the cabin didn't have electricity. But my grandmother was very intelligent. She was one of the few literate people around there. She used to write for magazines. She did income taxes because other people couldn't read or write. These were logging woodspeople. They wouldn't pay her in money. They would give her a bushel of peaches or make her a quilt. I really admired how much she helped other people. I fantasize all the time about going back to the beginning and starting all over again. That's what heaven is to me. You're born into the same family,

you're exactly who you are this time. You don't become a beetle or whatever. You get to live the same life again but with the knowledge of what you did the last time, and you're in total control of everything.

PLAYBOY: What would you change?

THORNTON: I would still be relatively poor. I would become famous in music before movies in my early 20s. I wouldn't have to be the Beatles, just respected, and people would know I was honest. I think there are three or four events I wouldn't go through again, like a couple of health events and a couple of marriages. Obviously I would have my father live longer. He died when I'd just graduated from high school. I would love to go back and be able



INTERVIEW

to talk to him again. What I would talk to him about would completely change what he thought of himself. He knew he was never going to rise above who he was, but he had more capacity in there. He just didn't know how to mine it. I think he was a frustrated guy who longed to live a fuller life and wanted to have more.

PLAYBOY: In the autobiography you wrote with Kinky Friedman a few years ago, you forgive your father for being physically abusive to you.

THORNTON: Absolutely. I think everything is forgivable except murder. I understand why my dad was the way he was. I think he felt a lot of guilt that he couldn't provide more for his family, and that probably triggered a lot of envy and jealousy and anger. He took it out on the very people he wished he was better for.

PLAYBOY: How old was he when he died?

THORNTON: He was about 44 or 45. He was a fireman in the Navy, on a destroyer. Have you ever seen these mesothelioma commercials? "Were you in the Navy? Did you work in the shipyards? Were you a fireman?" He was all of them. That's what killed him. The same thing killed my friend Warren Zevon. It's one of those bad diseases. My dad smoked, and you can imagine what his diet was like back in the South in the 1960s and 1970s. But he probably would have lived to the age of 75 if he hadn't gotten mesothelioma. My mom's still around. She's 83 and living in northern California with my brother and his wife and two of her grandkids.

PLAYBOY: How are you like your mother?

THORNTON: In almost every way. My daughter calls me Marlin. He's the father fish in *Finding Nemo* who's terrified for his son and won't let him go out and swim. My mom and I, we're both worriers like that. It's interesting, because when I'm performing, it's the one place where I'm not anxious.

PLAYBOY: So you always knew you would be an actor?

THORNTON: No. I was absolutely going to pitch for the St. Louis Cardinals.

Baseball was everything to me, but I had an injury and that sent me in another direction. In high school, there were always girls in drama class, which interested me, but I didn't think much about being an actor, frankly. I was good at girls but not very good at school. I had dyslexia on top of everything else. Then one of my teachers in Malvern, Arkansas recognised something in me. She said, "Hey, most people are in this class to goof off and so they won't have to do math, but I think you've got something and should do this." That was really meaningful to me. I never forgot that. I became an actor, star of the senior

This might surprise people, but I'd love to do a movie with Brad Pitt. I think we'd be great together.

play and all that.

PLAYBOY: Were you a partier in school?

THORNTON: We all did stuff then. That's just what you did. Drugs, drinking, sex. We didn't have AIDS, so nobody was worried. Sex was like, whatever you want to do, go for it. You might get the clap, but you'd go to the doctor and get some ampicillin or whatever. We were living.

PLAYBOY: How long did that lifestyle last?

THORNTON: Well, it gets old pretty fast, or at least it did for me. I did all kinds of hard stuff when I was in my late teens and early 20s, and I was fine. We tried everything. I was mostly a downers guy. It's different now for kids. I made a joke on a set the other day about taking reds. They were like, "Reds? What's that?" It turns out they don't even make that shit anymore. Drugs never really interested me after that early experimentation. Even pot. I think I'm al-

lergic to it. If I smoke a joint I start thinking the FBI is after me. My heart beats real fast, and I'm paranoid. I'm one of those guys who starts driving 20 miles an hour. But it was fun when it was fun.

PLAYBOY: How did you get to LA?

THORNTON: I had a friend, Tom Epper-son, who was moving to California to become a screenwriter. He said to me, "Look, you were in drama. Why don't you try to be an actor?" So I came out here in the early 1980s. I joined a theatre group. I took telemarketing jobs and all kinds of shit to get by. I never expected money from acting. I certainly didn't expect stardom. But

I caught the acting bug. I wanted to work as an actor. I got a role on *Matlock* and other minor parts. This was thrilling for me. Then Tom and I wrote *One False Move*, which got a lot of attention. Critics really liked it, and audiences did too. It was a great time. We were inventing things to do for ourselves. That's exactly what happened with *Sling Blade*.

PLAYBOY: How does *Sling Blade* look to you when you watch it now?

THORNTON: The same as it did the first time I ever saw it. That movie is exactly what I wanted it to be. Here's the thing: I've only directed in self-defense, to protect

the thing I'd written. That's what it was with *Sling Blade*. I never wanted to be a director. I just wanted to make sure the movie hit all the notes I saw in my head. That whole experience still blows my mind. The fact that people to this day come up to me saying "Mmm hmmm" in that character's voice and say things about a movie I did more than 20 years ago, I consider that an absolute honour.

PLAYBOY: You've said that after he saw an early cut of that movie, Martin Scorsese predicted correctly that you would win an Oscar for it. He also predicted that you would never again have the freedom to make a movie exactly the way you wanted. Was he right about that too?

THORNTON: Oh, he was definitely right. That's how it works in Hollywood. When you're this hot discovery, people treat you one way, but once they've got you, it's pretty much all over. Look at *Sling Blade*. John Ritter was the most famous person in



INTERVIEW

that movie I wasn't any more well-known than the kid in it. You can never make a movie like that twice. It's like, let's say, a man meets a girl who's a rock star. She's got tattoos and piercings, and the guys are falling all over themselves, and maybe a couple of women are too. She plays her guitar like Jimmy Page in concert, and you're like, "Wow, this chick knocks me out." You start going out with her. Then you go to a concert and see her up there in her underwear, and all the guys, and maybe some of the women, are still falling all over themselves for her. But the next day, you're saying, "Listen, I want you to get those tattoos covered up."

Sometimes when the suits get involved, it's like that. They love how original you are. They love that you did it your way. You're gonna be fucking huge. But once you sign up with them, you're gonna do it a whole different way.

PLAYBOY: How is it that you've spent your whole career bouncing from indie projects to blockbusters?

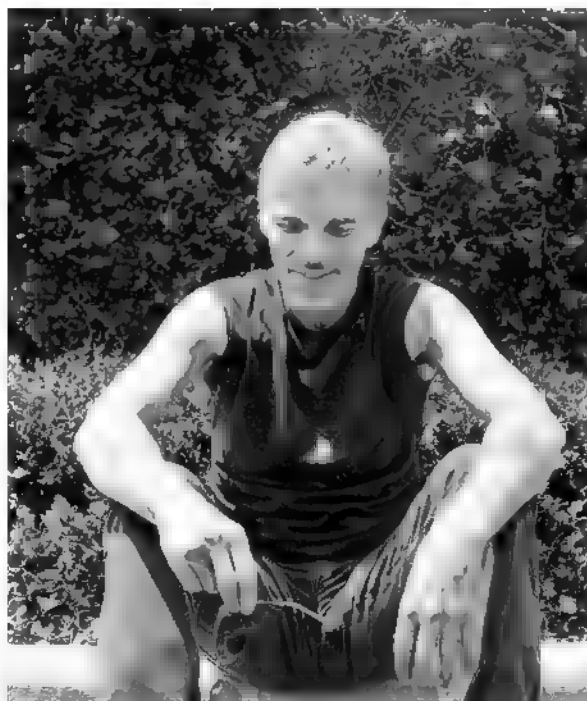
THORNTON: You know what it is? It's that I made my way in independent film. I was a guy who could play a leading man or a character because I started out playing character parts, so the audience lets me do it. Whereas for guys who made it as matinee idols, like Tom Cruise or whoever, the audience sometimes doesn't allow them to play an extreme character. I feel bad for them, because I'm sure they want to. I thought Tom was great in *Rain Man* with Dustin Hoffman.

These days, if you do an independent film, it gets a little distributor, they give you no money to make it and they want seven movie stars in it. So you end up casting people who aren't really right for the parts, and the whole point of independent film is that it feels real. If you've got seven top movie stars in a \$3 million movie about a guy who lives in a closet or something, all of a sudden you're taking out a movie. When independent film went that way, it kind of

was lost. Now it's premium cable, which is a great format for independent film because you can make an eight- or 10-hour movie. That's what *Fargo* is.

PLAYBOY: Are you happy with the career you've had?

THORNTON: I didn't think I'd ever be in a movie, let alone be part of some of the most fantastic movies of the past few decades. It's a miracle to me. *Monster's Ball*, *The Alamo*, *Friday Night Lights*, all those movies. There are also things I wish I had gotten to do. I was set to star in Robert Altman's last movie before he died. That's a regret. I would love to make a movie with Martin Scorsese. I've



always wanted to work with Woody Allen, Jack Nicholson, Gene Hackman. I want to play a college professor in a movie. I always have. I always wanted to do a World War II movie. I've played a soldier, but I can be a general now. I can play Eisenhower or somebody. Oh, and this might surprise people, but I'd love to do a movie with Brad Pitt.

PLAYBOY: That would certainly be interesting to watch.

THORNTON: Yeah, I think we'd be

great together. We'd play a good couple of Southern guys. We grew up not far from each other, me in Arkansas, him in Missouri. We come from the same thing. Brad does a very good Southern character. There was a little movie this year called *Hell or High Water*, about two brothers who are bank robbers in Texas. They have to get money to save their family's farm. Now, the guys who starred in it were around 35, which is natural. But Brad and I could do our own version of a Southern heist thriller.

PLAYBOY: You've been touring again with your band, the Boxmasters. Do you ever want to be a full-time rock star?

THORNTON: Not really. I love balancing music with acting. We make good records. Nobody will ever give us a chance probably, but we do. I have two concept records that one of my bandmates and I wrote that are as good as any concept record I've ever heard. But (a), where are you going to sell a concept record? And (b), who cares about us? The music business is not a place where you make a living anymore, unless you're one of the top pop or hip-hop or Nashville country stars. We've had some good reviews and great tours, but I hope it doesn't end there. I'd say that if we don't have an album that's recognized on a high level at some point, I'll be disappointed.

PLAYBOY: Goals.

THORNTON: That's right. You never stop sculpting your life. You never stop thinking about things you can do to stretch yourself here and there. It's not always neat and clean as you go along. There are a bunch of things I might like to try over again, and some people over the years who maybe I've wronged. I hope I can get around

to apologising for those things. But I'll tell you something. Right now, things are pretty good. I'm happy with my family, happy with my work. I'm still passionate about everything. I just don't care about the party anymore. By "the party" I mean it in every sense of the word, not just partying. I don't need to be part of the machine. I've got my life, and my life is enough for me. As long as I get to keep doing things that feel good and making things people enjoy, that's all I care about. ■



Amy Taylor



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About me

I was born and raised in California, USA. While spending nearly two decades as a published model, I also received my undergraduate degree from UC Berkeley and MBA in Los Angeles and my commercial pilots license in Arizona. When I'm not in front of the camera, I'm enjoying the sunny skies flying, keeping fit at the gym or at the beach playing with my dog. I'm of Italian and Hungarian ancestry. It's quite a mix. I've got the sort of curves fantasies are made of but frankly one of the things that makes me feel sexiest is taking my semi-automatic out to the shooting range. I've traveled to 45 countries so far and I'm eager to see more of the world. Travel is my only addiction.

Turn on

Intelligence. Nothing is hotter to me than a brilliant man. I admit that power is also sexy but only in the hands of someone who uses it correctly. Also, spending a rainy day messing up a luxurious hotel suite, weathering out a tropical storm in an overwater bungalow, nibbling gourmet food and drink between sweaty bouts of sex.

Turn off

Bogotry, ignorance and selfishness, because love, brilliance and I don't think it's possible to be intelligent and a bogot, ignorant or selfish. These things render someone definitely unsexy in my book.

For more on Amy you can follow her on Instagram @amytaylorla













SHAWN STUSSY

The world's most influential street style genius on growing up with design and returning to his original craft

As told to **ETHAN STEWART**

It was always about surfboards. I made my first one at 13. Since then, that's been my job. Way before designing or my clothing line or even thinking about design, it was surfboards.

My parents had a printing shop that we hung around in as kids. They would pick us up from school, and we would go there and hang out until 9 or 10 at night. I learned about printing and typesetting and old letterpress, passing up negatives and chalking out the dust. My whole family was exposed to that at a young age. It was as if my dad had been a tailor or something; it was the family business. Graphic design, at least in terms of manipulating fonts and layouts, was something I grew up with.

Looking back, I still can't separate the two, surfboards and designing. I was always drawing stuff or doing little graphic typesetting things, so even when I was making my first boards I thought, Ooh, where am I going to put my little logo? How am I going to write "Stussy"? I wasn't thinking about these things specifically or individually; it wasn't "design" in that way. They were just happening. I was 13 years old, and it was life.

It was never a conscious plan, not in a million years. I was never like, "Hey, I'm going to make surfboards for my job in my adult life and start a clothing company based on the logo I put on those surfboards." I was just doing what I loved, staying interested and seeing where it led me. Luckily, it ended up being sustainable, but you don't know that when you're starting out. Often you still can't

see it when you're halfway down the road. At a certain point, I guess you have to trust yourself.

I started so young that by the time I had to make decisions about the worth of my work and my so-called talent, I already had a track record. It wasn't like I was 21 or 22, just out of college, and had to say, "Okay, now what am I going to do?" I never had to face that moment.

Nowadays, we're force-fed visuals. We download so much visual activity in any given day that it has become nearly impossible to find images we're passionate about. You just cruise through all these pictures with one flick of your hand. We all do it. It's a ton of information, but in the end, we're all looking at the same things. Originality gets harder. You can sit in your underpants in Prague and know where the hip Japanese guy was partying the night before. You used to have to go and physically find your influences; you had a real sense of discovery.

When I started doing my thing, there weren't a lot of original ideas either. I was appropriating. I was always getting little glimmers from somewhere else, but maybe those somewheres were more personal to me. I had to choose to seek them out. I had to get on a plane and leave the country, go to a gallery or find a certain magazine store in Tokyo. It wasn't easy, and 10,000 other people weren't looking at the same glimmer at the same time. I was watching my own campfire, just staring into the flames, and the ideas would come from that. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JEFF JOHNSON**

HAWAII



IN THE END, WE'RE ALL LOOKING AT THE SAME THINGS. ORIGINALITY GETS HARDER.





20Q

KUMAIL NANJIANI

*With **The Big Sick**, the Silicon Valley scene stealer weaves together an indie comedy, a love story and a hospital drama whose most harrowing turns come directly from his own life*

BY SAM TRACOSO PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHLOE APTEL

Q1: *In the movie of your life, what's the defining childhood scene we flash back to?*

NANJIANI: I was in the second grade, and the teacher wasn't in the classroom yet. We weren't supposed to leave or go to the restroom if the teacher wasn't there, but I had to pee really, really bad. The teacher just never came back, and then I was like, "All right, I have to run to the bathroom and do it." So I ran to the front of the class, but it was too late. I just started peeing. And I was making this sound while I was peeing, "Ah-hhhhhh!" Everyone just shut up and watched me. It was like stand-up. I was standing in front, facing them. In a way, it was my first performance.

Q2: *Your career has progressed from stand-up comedy to TV to a leading role in a movie. How do you feel about acting?*

NANJIANI: Acting at its core is silly. It's like you're playing pretend. Ultimately it's lame and stupid, but I love it and it's important to me, so I take it seriously. There will always be someone who talks about the importance of acting, but then you'll see their movie and it's fucking horrible. You don't get to

talk like this, you know?

Q3: *What do you say to your friends when they make something bad?*

NANJIANI: I'll find the right thing to say that's not really lying and not really a compliment. It's the kind of lie that wouldn't hold up in court but would hold up on *The People's Court*. Like, we know what you fucking did, but you don't go to jail for it. I'll say something like "That was such an interesting story."

Q4: *Are you hard on yourself when it comes to your own output?*

NANJIANI: I try not to be too hard on myself about stuff I've done in the past. I'm always hard on myself in the present. But once it's done, if you're judging it, you're just living in regret, you know? I don't think being hard on myself is necessarily a good thing, I just can't avoid it.

Q5: *You and your wife, Emily Gordon, wrote **The Big Sick** together. It's your love story—including Emily being in a coma for a week. When Emily was really sick, was there a part of you that thought she wouldn't make it?*

NANJIANI: Oh yes. The hardest thing

is when it's something that's such a big part of your life. Someone's sick and there's truly nothing you can do about it. It's such a profound helplessness. It's a person you love, a person who's normally responsive and has feelings, who might go away because of some body thing. The truth of it feels so vulgar—the fact that we come down to some fucking cells not working right and then this beautiful world just goes away.

Q6: *There's a scene in which you ask your friends, "Is it okay that I'm not there right now?" Emily is in a coma, your relationship is on again, off again, and you're doing comedy. Do you ever contemplate an alternative timeline in which you don't go back?*

NANJIANI: I loved being on SNL. I loved it with all my heart. It was the best thing in my whole life, but I don't miss it. It's like going back to college. I still get to be there pretty often. I did just the right amount of time and left with harmony and happiness. It would make you insane to keep proving yourself every week. After 11 years, I think I said what I had to say.

Q7: *So what made you go back?*





NANJIANI: When she was going under, I remember thinking, If she comes out of this, I'm going to marry her. It's like being in a horror movie, but it's also devastatingly sad. Part of it is that you get sucked in. In the movie, I go back because of guilt, but then I stay because I realize I'm in love with her. In reality, I think it was both. I had this guilt that was so self-involved, that guilt of "I should've been able to see this coming, why did I not understand how sick she was?" I still have that.

Q8: *The film doubles as a story about young creative people trying to make it. When did you know you had the goods to succeed in comedy?*

NANJIANI: It must have been in Chicago. I started in comedy at a point when there were a lot of people who were very good at it. I was lucky in that I didn't have a bad set until I'd been doing it for three or four months, whether it was because of my nervous energy or the fact that I really worked on my jokes. I wasn't ever like, "Oh, I'm going to make it" — and whatever "making it" means keeps evolving — but in the beginning, I realised I have the ability to write jokes that are different from other people's.

Q9: *Do you think any of the roles you've played are racist?*

NANJIANI: I play a lot of food-delivery guys. I've never played a 7-Eleven clerk, I've never played a fucking Dunkin' Donuts guy. I try to do parts that aren't defined by ethnicity. I did a string of small parts in big comedies — too many of them, and I'm not going to do those anymore — like Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates, Central Intelligence and Fist Fight. I did them because I wanted to get better at acting and make connections. I was trying to find stuff where the joke is not my character mispronouncing words or swearing wrong.

Q10: *What's the funnest experience you've had on a big budget set?*

NANJIANI: I've definitely worked with people multiple days in a row and then realised they think I'm Kal Penn. They would talk about how much they loved Harold & Kumar. The number of us is so small that people just think "brown guy." The guy from Life of Pi. I get confused with him all the time. I was working with Karan Soni, who's a very funny Indian actor, and he said he'd done some movie and someone thought he was me. I was like, All right, finally!

Q11: *Do you dislike confrontation?*

NANJIANI: It depends on the day. Like, what the fuck is it going to take for you to see me as me and not some other person? Sometimes people will come up to me and say, "Hey, that joke of yours is really good" and it's Aziz Ansari's joke. I'll be like, "Oh, that wasn't me. That's the other one." I say that a lot. It's me being like, You know what? This awkwardness is going to be all yours. I'm not going to feel awkward about it.

Q12: *Does it frighten you to be a visible person of colour in the age of Trump?*

NANJIANI: I think it would be more scary if I wasn't a visible person of colour. I think being a known figure protects me a little more. It's much scarier to be like that guy who got killed in Oklahoma — it's fucking terrifying. I'm a lot more aware of my ethnicity in other states and cities than I am in Los Angeles. We have a vague, quick little joke about that in the movie. My brother and I are arguing when a family looks at us, and we say, "It's okay. We hate terrorists." That's basically a little joke, but as a brown person in America, you are aware of your ethnicity every waking moment.

Q13: *Since you have a sizable platform, do*

you feel you have a political obligation to speak out?

NANJIANI: I used to think I didn't have any duty to stand up for anybody, but things are so scary now, I just feel the urge to do it as a person. It's crazy, but I also feel I'm probably not convincing anybody with this stuff. I don't think if I tweet, "Hey, Trump is causing brown people to be demonised in America, it makes us feel unsafe and my mom is scared to leave her house," it will convince anybody who's a major Trump supporter. I'm preaching to the choir.

Q14: *How do you stay sane in this climate?*

ARMISEN: I think you have to find balance. I was reading an interview with an expert on totalitarian regimes. He was saying you should give yourself a half hour a day to look up stuff that's going on and focus on one thing that can be your thing. Focus on health care, art, transgender rights, Islamophobia. Have that be the thing you want to try to protect in what little way you can.

Q15: *In the film, you're an Uber driver. Have you had any other bad employers in your life?*

NANJIANI: [Laughs] I had a shitty boss who was just a dick. She loved the power she had. I was working at the University of Chicago, and she would write letters and put them in my record like I was a fucking kid and she was a principal. I made the websites. Yeah, I know it's stereotypical, but I was bad at it.

Q16: *Do you have any unfinished comedy bits that you haven't been able to crack?*

NANJIANI: There's one story about how Emily woke me up in the middle of the night and said, "What's that smell?" She couldn't figure out what it was because it's hard to google a smell. There's no Shazam for smells, you know? And anything in Google is like "Are you the

I'VE NEVER PLAYED A 7-ELEVEN CLERK OR A DUNKIN' DONUTS GUY. I TRY TO DO PARTS NOT DEFINED BY ETHNICITY.



only one who can smell it? You're going to die." Or "Can other people smell it? Everyone's going to die." But she convinced herself it was probably a wire inside the wall that was on fire. So we called 911 and were like, "This isn't serious. Please don't send anybody, but we think there's something." Two minutes later, three fire trucks show up at our house and I have to open the door. I'm like this little guy, and these fucking

firemen say, "Oh, the smell... do you mean the skunk?" I yell up to Emily, "Honey, it was a skunk!" And she says, "Oh right. Yup, that's what that is."

Q17: *Comedians are known for being sharply attuned to pain. Is it worth it?*

NANJIANI: I'm fairly neurotic. I'm a worrier. I feel a lot of guilt over everything. And honestly, this election has changed me. I'm a generally optimistic person and I think things are going to

turn out fine. Last year, seeing all the negativity flying around changed my outlook. I realized that progress isn't guaranteed. People have to work for it. Since World War II, the world sort of knew what was right and what was wrong... we were moving in the right direction. Now it feels as though we're going backwards.

Q18: *You and Emily got married almost exactly 10 years before *The Big Sick*'s premiere date. What have you learned after being with someone for a decade?*

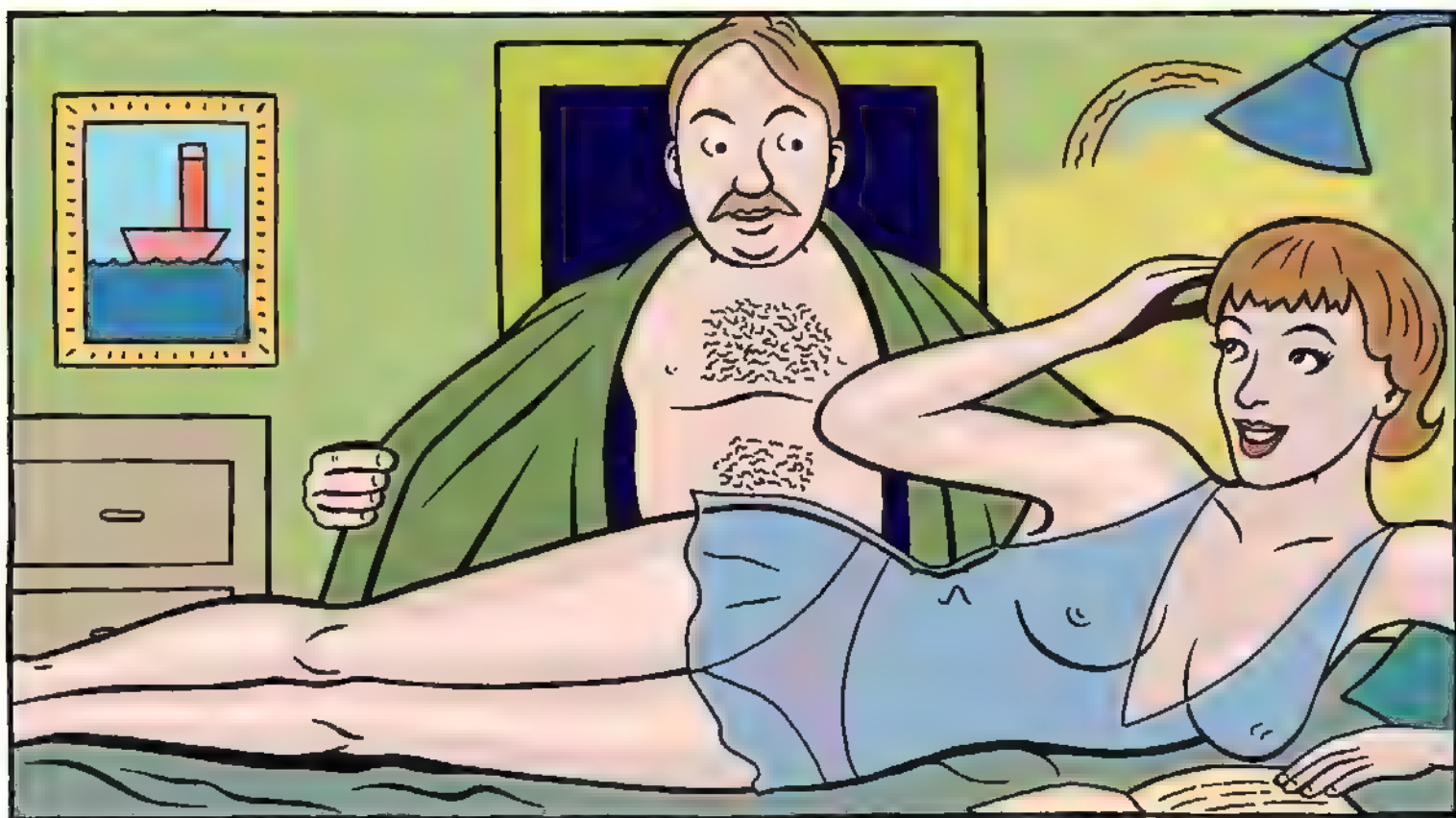
NANJIANI: What's been good about marriage is that it allows us both to be better versions of ourselves. She allows me to be a better person, and I hope I allow her to do the same. The other thing I learned is that relationships aren't static, they're always evolving. We've gotten better at being married to each other. I'm also excited to see where it goes. We're going to be together forever. My parents are still together and her parents are still together. I've always thought of marriage as something you do only when you definitely want to stay with the person.

Q19: *With all that has happened—a marriage your family considered sacrilegious, a career in comedy instead of medicine—how are you getting along with your parents?*

NANJIANI: For them, my life didn't make a lot of sense, which I understand because it doesn't make any sense. They would watch my stuff and not talk about it, but they visited me on the set of this movie—the first time they ever visited me on a set. I didn't give my parents enough credit. I really thought this was something we wouldn't be able to work out, and we're still working it out, but the fact that our relationship has evolved in this way means they've made compromises I didn't think they were capable of. I underestimated them.

Q20: *Getting back to the movie, Emily's mom, played by Holly Hunter, has this great line: "We're all just winging it." Is that a personal motto?*

NANJIANI: That's a tough one. Even if I thought so, someone else may not. I think everyone is romantic in a way, even the coldest people. I think everyone has a version of what romance is. I think it's part of the human existence. [dog barks in distance] I heard that noise. Are you barking at me? ■



M. KUPPERMAN



THE NEW CREATIVES

Photo essay by RYAN LOWRY

NATALIE WHITE

and stepped inside a Plexiglas box. Its floor-
space piece marked the beginning of "Natalie White for Equal Rights," the feminist
artist's ongoing series of works celebrating enthusiasm for the 94-year-old ratified
Equal Rights Amendment.

The proposed legislation, which would
constitutionally guarantee equal rights for
women, died in 1991 after failing to receive enough state ratifications. Had it suc-
ceeded, it would have been the first piece of

for more than 50 photographers and was the
first American woman featured in French
art magazines. "It was a real triumph for me," she says.
finish line.

"People don't want a lecture about wom-
en's rights," she says. "I want to get my
message out. So, I'm using my sexuality as
a tool. I'm using my body to get my mes-
sage out. Sexually belongs to somebody else and turning
my most vulnerable self into something that is
empowering."

White's work takes an unapologetic ap-
proach to nudity. Consider the giant clothes-free

she staged a march from New York to Washington,
D.C., in 1991. "I was arrested," she says. "I was
jailed, tried and convicted of 'defacing public
property.' Given the goal, few people thought
her crime was unjustified. White's efforts have
inspired her into something more. She's called
tricia Arquette and Lizzy Jagger testified in her
favour. "If women want equal rights, we have to
stop asking for them and start demanding them."
White's work is a political statement. "We won't support them," she says. — Lia Simon





FABIAN WILLIAMS

Growing up in a military family in the town of Fayetteville, North Carolina, Fabian Williams answered a different call of duty. Drawing, painting, designing and writing, he diverged from his military upbringing but maintained a soldier's focus and determination. "I know what it's like to take orders," he says. "I didn't call a bathroom a bathroom, I called it a latrine."

Williams understands his work as a sort of military campaign, "a guerilla war" against disinformation and the erosion of civil rights. "The time for doing bullshit is over," he says. "There is no more time to do art for the sake of art." This full embrace of art's political dimension is refreshingly up-front. Williams's work is not just commentary; it's ammunition.

Case in point: His Race Card series, which gained him some early notoriety, began during his years as a toiler in the advertising world, where people of colour were few and the creative product was often questionable. The deceptively soft-hued pieces doubled as actionable objects that their owners could hold up in the face of racial fouls in the workplace — in Williams's words, "a way to address some uncomfortable things in a playful manner."

Having mostly left commercial work to pursue fine art, Williams can now be found painting murals on the streets or working in his Decatur, Georgia studio, where the news is always on in the background. "The artist's job is to make people feel the times," he says. "I'm trying to reach people who don't agree with me." — *Kevin Shea Adams*



DABS MYLA

For the married multimedia duo known as Dabs Myla, work and play often mean the same thing. Their immersive pieces incorporate bubbly letters, geometric patterns, kitschy motifs and anthropomorphic characters — impish hot dogs, cheerful cacti, sexy martinis. Whether reimagining a Hello Kitty character for Sanrio or erecting a cityscape for MTV, the Los Angeles-based pair are masters of recasting ordinary objects and ideas into sprawling Technicolor environments.

Their influences include Disneyland, graffiti, mid-century modernism, tattoo flash and vintage Hollywood. But while their visual tapestries suggest organised chaos — picture the Looney

Tunes cast cannonballing into a Slim Aarons pool for a taping of MTV Spring Break — nothing has a greater impact on their imaginary worlds than the real one they've created together.

The couple fell in love at art school in their native Melbourne 11 years ago. Dabs taught Myla how to draw graffiti, and they merged their noms de plume soon after. (They asked us not to reveal their full names.) These days, they finish each other's sentences and haven't spent more than 12 hours apart. "We're still two people, I think."

Dabs says, "but just barely." Dabs Myla have painted murals around the world, exhibited at galleries including MOCA, Jonathan Levine and Known, and collaborated with global brands including Adidas, Viacom and Vans. A request to

design the set for the 2015 MTV Movie Awards came with a chance to realise their creations on a career-defining scale and generated momentum for their largest design job to date: transforming a 4,000-squarefoot warehouse into a mixed-media wonderland with the furniture company Modemuca.

Their current focus is on a pop-up installation coming this fall. The timing is appropriate. In an age of seething national animosity, Dabs Myla's designs can be seen as defiantly escapist. "The colour and the luminosity of our work is what I see as beauty," Myla says. "And when I look at the world and I'm not thinking about all the fucked-up shit, that's what I see: all these incredible colours." — *Lt. Suman*

**"IF YOU JUST
SWITCH YOUR
BRAIN, YOU CAN
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COLORS AND
AMAZING THINGS
IN THE WORLD."**





**“BEAUTY IS PERSONAL.
IT’S VISCERAL. IT’S UNIQUE
TO EACH OF US BASED ON OUR
CULTURE, OUR UPBRINGING,
OUR PERSONAL BELIEFS, OUR
FETISHES, WHATEVER.”**

KERIN ROSE GOLD

Kerin Rose Gold has never had a taste for subtlety. Even if she were stripped bare, it would be impossible to ignore the tangerine locks that have become her personal trademark. Indeed, Gold, like her eyewear and accessories brand, A-Morr, has always thrived on embracing the bold and the unconventional. The native New Yorker muses on a moment from her teen years: “I remember fully embellishing a 1990s winter Olympics bootleg T-shirt,” she says with a slight grin, “with the reasoning of ‘Who would ever do this?’”

Gold graduated from NYU with a pop culture history degree that linked her loves of art, music and fashion. She formed A-Morr in 2009, infusing the world of true couture and bespoke manufacturing with her innate vibrance. To call her signature collections “eyewear” would be to commit a gross understatement: “Face art” would be closer to the mark. From oversized shields covered in black studs to lenses meticulously hand-embellished with Swarovski crystals, they’re both attention grabbing and functional. Gold insists her pieces are meant for everyday wear.

Her celebrity clientele includes Rihanna, Katy Perry and Lady Gaga; her accessories range from a patch-festooned denim vest for A-Trak to a crystal mouth guard for Teyana Taylor. And *Vogue* Italia has praised her as the “favourite [eyewear] brand of American stars.” Ultimately, though, Gold designs for herself and for everyone who shares a passion for what she calls “fuck-you glamour.” — *Dan Deahl*





"THE POLITICS OF THE CITY ARE VERY MUCH A PART OF MY WORK. I'M REALLY INTO CHOLO CULTURE, BUT I'M NOT A CHOLO. I'M STUDIO BANGING."





WHITNEY BELL

Like most women with a smartphone and a social media account or two, Whitney Bell has received countless unsolicited dick pics. But instead of merely complaining about — or, let's be honest, mocking — them with her friends, Bell decided to turn these unwanted images into art, having been inspired by one particular photo she says was "so beautiful it should be in a museum."

Enhancing her own collection with submissions from other women, Bell premiered her provocative art show, aptly titled *I Didn't Ask for This: A Lifetime of Dick Pics*, in Los Angeles last April and is now taking it north to San Francisco. "This isn't the same as revenge porn, and I'm not trying to shame genitalia," she says. "I'm trying to show how ridiculous it is that this is a constant problem."

The self-proclaimed "art school dropout" and "intersectional feminist bitch" also owns a loudmouthed online boutique, KiddBell.com, which launched last year. The store offers unisex baseball caps proclaiming LET BOYS BE FEMININE, mock turtlenecks featuring commands like RESIST and REVOLT, and pins flaunting the word CUNT. Equal parts artist and activist, Bell explains her motivations: "It's easy to think something isn't an issue if you haven't experienced it, so a lot of men don't understand the myriad ways sexual harassment affects women. I want to show it's a lot more pervasive than they may know."

Whether they're in a gallery or a web store, Bell's creations are informed by a desire to reap empowerment for women from that which is used against them, from the word slut to an unsolicited sext, showing how we can all create agency out of impotence. — *Anna del Gato*



ALEX BECERRA

There were no museums or galleries in Piru, California, the small town where artist Alex Becerra grew up. His aesthetic education came instead from perusing stacks of *Lowrider* and the Chicano erotic zine *Teen Angels*. When he discovered he could draw, he practised by tattooing his peers.

"My junior year in high school, I fucked up everyone's skin at my job," Becerra says. "I didn't realise how deep the needle should go."

These elements — the erotic grist of adolescent fantasy, a homespun amateurism, the Chicano gang aesthetic — percolate through The bold, messy paintings that have

earned the flamboyant, thick-bearded Becerra a reputation as an outlaw in Los Angeles's art scene and one of the market's most sought-after young guns. The 28-year-old studied at Otis College of Art and Design and now lives in his Inglewood studio, where he produces work critics have compared to that of Philip Guston, Martin Kippenberger, Mike Kelley and Pablo Picasso.

Becerra still finds inspiration in the binc-a-brac of the erotic underworld. Escort ads in *LA Xpress* serve as models for figurative portraits — female nudes contorted in absurdist, hyper-sexualised poses and charged with electric pinks and thick smears of paint. They're abject and witty, self-

consciously kitschy and vulgar.

"Who knows what the fuck runs through people's minds when they see my work," Becerra says. "People have thought I'm female because of how I handle the female form. A male wouldn't be this crude."

It's that willingness to paint outside his comfort zone that makes Becerra's wild fantasies feel raw, intimate and authentic. And when he's not painting, making tacos for gallery hoppers from ingredients stuffed in his tool belt or sending stacks of drawings to his Chicago dealer in a greasy pizza box ("It's the best way to naturally patina them"), Becerra will still tattoo anyone who'll let him. Free of charge. — *Peter Smek*

**"VISUAL ART CAN
BE A DRUG — THAT
RUSH OF ENDOR
PHINS. BEAUTY
CAN GIVE YOU A
PORTAL INTO A
DIFFERENT
PERSPECTIVE."**





ABASI ROSBOROUGH

"In fashion, many big companies won't take a stand politically because they don't want to alienate consumers," says Greg Rosborough. His menswear label, Abasi Rosborough, co-founded in 2013 with fellow Fashion Institute of Technology grad Abdul Abasi, isn't so timid. The line's collections have names such as *Diaspora* and *Dissident*, one of its look books features a black model at the Lincoln Memorial, and the clothes are manufactured in New York City, largely by immigrants. "Our business revolves around working with immigrants," says Rosborough. "They're the epitome of the American dream."

Both designers have a connection to the current immigration debate. Abasi, who spent nearly eight years in the Army, eventually working as a missile technician, is the son of Nigenans. Rosborough grew up in Arizona, close to the Mexican border. But more than a critique of public policy, their work is a revolt against the entire concept of menswear, the standards of which have barely changed in decades. "How is it possible that with everything evolving around us — communication, architecture, automobiles — the thing that's closest to our skin hasn't evolved in even the simplest way?" asks Rosborough.

By contrast, Abasi Rosborough clothing features all-natural fabrics that let the wearer move easily, seams that follow the body's anatomy and magnets in lieu of buttons. Their futuristic vision is catching on: In February, the duo was nominated for the prestigious LVMH Prize for Young Fashion Designers, voted on this year by Marc Jacobs and Kendall Jenner, among others. But will fame make them less outspoken? "I don't care if we alienate anybody," says Rosborough. "If we're ignoring what we're actually thinking, the whole thing's a sham." — *Sean Marung*



SIGNE PIERCE

It's not easy to categorize Signe Pierce's work. Think Kardashians mixed with performance art, soaked in neon. Pierce, a former *Saturday Night Live* intern who cites a visit to psychedelic designer Lisa Frank's house in Pierce's native Tucson as an early inspiration, describes herself as a "reality artist." Her photography and videos capture a hyper-saturated milieu, like looking into a not-too-far-off dystopian future through rose-coloured lenses on a selfie stick.

It's no surprise rapper Big Sean tapped Pierce earlier this year to design the lighting for his "Halfway Off the Balcony" music video. The product is a sumptuous palette of bright

hues against banal settings. A suburban house suddenly becomes ethereal, as does a telephone booth and even wet pavement. She calls this "aesthetic direction," or using her keenly attuned eye to illuminate beauty where you least expect it.

Pierce isn't afraid to turn the camera on herself. *American Reflexxx*, a surreal short film that premiered at Art Basel Miami in 2013, follows Pierce as she walks down a Myrtle Beach, South Carolina street. The 14-minute video shows her being taunted and eventually attacked for wearing suggestive clothing and covering her face with a reflective mask that, ultimately, serves as a mirror of reality turned ugly.

"People are always so polarized when they're confronted by new ideas or anything they don't immediately recognize," says Pierce, who had an engineer design a selfie stick that she could wear on her face while posing in the middle of Times Square. The resulting performance video, *Reality Is a Porno & Life Is But a Meme*, is another cautionary tale.

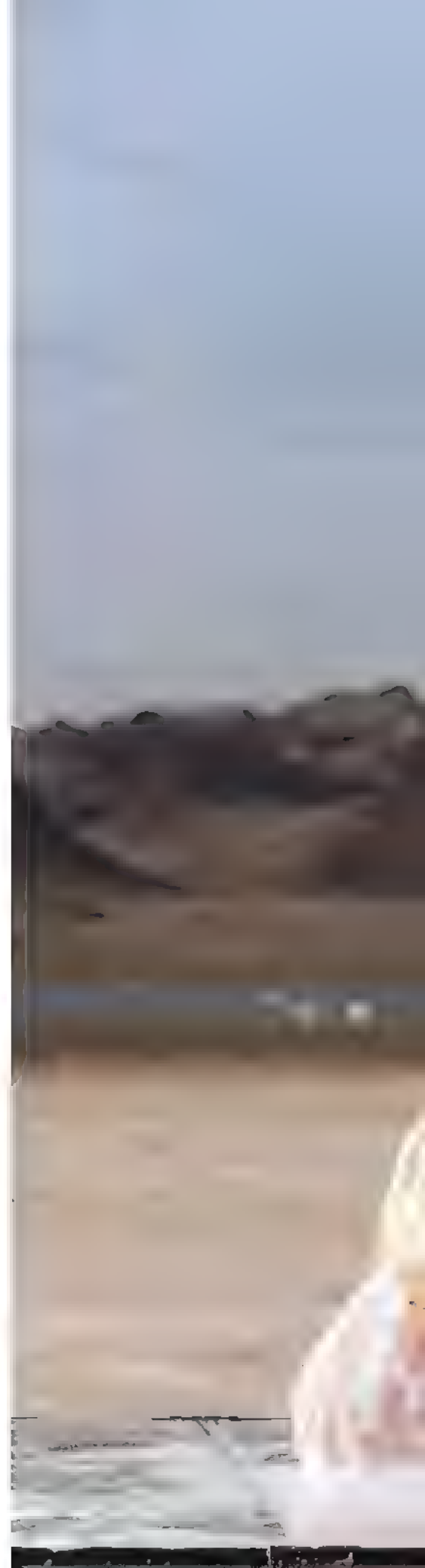
Much of Pierce's work sets out to dismantle society's preconceived fears and challenge what beauty looks like. "I'm not afraid to be an artist who embraces new media and uses social media as a platform," she says. "The people who need to see art the most are the people who aren't in the art world." — *Samantha Sayavongsa*



Kindly **Myers**

*The 26 year old American Playboy model and blonde bombshell
who loves to travel, meet new people, and spend time
with her two dogs.*

Photography by **GARY MILLER**







Coca-Cola

RD OFF ROAD
TOYOTA PRIMO DRIVE GENERAL



Hobbies and interests

I love horseback riding. I have been riding since I was 3 years old. Animals are my favourite. I also love to travel. The world is a beautiful place.

My goals and career ambitions

Currently, I am on my way to becoming a real estate agent.

Who inspires me

I am very inspired by strong women. Famous or not, I love being independent and following my dreams.

Favourite quote

"Beneath the make-up and behind the smile, I'm just a girl who wishes for the world." - Marilyn Monroe

Turn on

A good sense of humour. Make me laugh, and don't take yourself too seriously.

Turn off

Being rude to others. Always be kind.

The perfect date

Take me on an adventure. I love experiencing new things. Let's get outside and explore.

My girl crush

Britney Spears

My favourite food

Spaghetti, for sure.

My biggest fear

I hate public speaking.

One destination I would love to visit

I want to go to the Maldives. It looks so beautiful.

I'm not embarrassed to say

I am extremely clumsy.

If you'd like to see more of Kindly, you can follow her on Instagram @kindlymyers





Bra 34DD
Waist 24
Hips 86cm
Height 171cm
Weight 57kg
Eye colour brown







ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

KIM GORDON

*You could not have crashed your way through the 1980s and 1990s indie rock world without encountering Kim Gordon, then best known as the bassist and vocalist of the seminal noise pop band Sonic Youth. With long blonde hair cascading over her eyes, a low slung bass around her neck and an eat me shirt on her lanky frame, Gordon was — and is — a ferocious musician who became an alt rock style icon, a high profile feminist and a muse to everyone from Kurt Cobain to Tavi Gevinson. But before she began pursuing music in earnest, Gordon was an art student with a collaborative streak. In addition to exhibiting her mixed media work everywhere from Tokyo to London, she has co founded a clothing company (X Girl), curated countless art shows and created work with Yoko Ono, among many others. These days, Gordon's output is more varied than ever: A few years ago she launched the cathartic guitar duo Body/Head; in 2015 she published her unflinching memoir, *Girl in a Band*; and just this September she released "Murdered Out," her first single under her own name. Visitors to this year's Art Basel Miami Beach can experience her take on music, fashion and*

art all at once in Proposal for Dance, a video performance piece in which Gordon and another artist, clad in Rodarte dresses, mercilessly manipulate electric guitars in front of (and at times in the middle of) a live audience. Her recent paintings and sculptural works are rooted in her downtown No Wave beginnings, visually name checking bands like Pussy Galore, using spray paint and trashed canvas and somehow achieving, through the wreckage and noise, a sublime abstraction. Almost 40 years in, Gordon continues to provide a reverberating commentary on the high and the low — and a point blank look at what she recently called "culture collapsing in on itself." — Eric Steinman



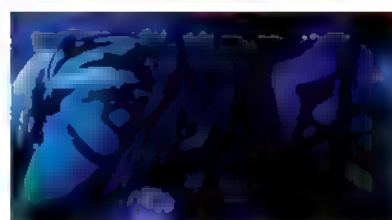
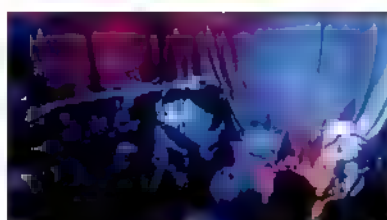
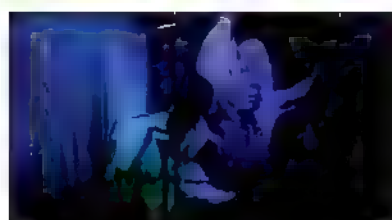
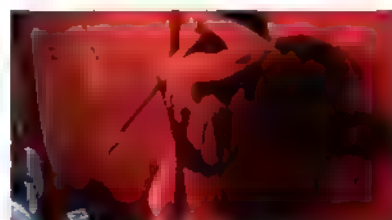
Above: Portrait of the artist by David Black. **Opposite:** mirror wreath #2, Spray paint on mirror 24 x 18 inches, 2016.







ART ST IN RES DENCE



Opposite page Pussy Gore Acrylic on canvas 55½ x 39½ inches, 2015

Above Stills from Proposa for Dance DVD dir Philipp Virus, 2012

Below Fortress of G assitude Acrylic on gessoed canvas with Aqua Resin and fibreglass, 20 x 30 x 43½ nches, 2015



Elif Celik

Photography by THIERRY BROUARD









About me

I was born in a city called Diyarbakir in south east Turkey. I'm the first international Turkish playmate ever and I feel honoured to be part of the Playboy South Africa family. I love to travel, it's a passion of mine. I'm an animal lover and a vegan and I always try to be polite, positive and kind.

My hobbies and interests

Reading books, yoga, meditation, cooking (I'm an amazing cook), horse riding and travelling.

My goals and career ambitions

I don't like telling people my goals, because then it wouldn't happen. I prefer to keep it a secret.

Who inspires me

I love to hang out with successful people. That inspires me.

Turn on

Someone who makes me feel loved and special.

Turn off

Men with a lot of muscles totally turn me off. Just the thought of a guy who spends that much time on his body.

The perfect date

It must be romantic, please.

My favourite food

I love vegan ravioli.

My biggest fear

Being lonely.

One destination I would like visit

Right now, I would really like to visit Cape Town and say hello to you guys.

For more on Elif's journeys you can follow her on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram @misselfeelk beauty, style and comfort so we can all feel comfortable in our skin.



Waist: 55

Hips: 33

Height: 173

Weight: 48

Eye colour: brown







A crow is perched on a weathered wooden branch, facing left. The background is a dramatic, cloudy sky with varying shades of grey and blue. The title 'THE SPARROW' is overlaid in large, bold, white capital letters with a black outline.

THE SPARROW

...expectedly just
help — but is it
? An exclusive



FICTION

Rachel Childs and Brian Delacroix crossed paths again six months after their last e-mail contact, in the spring, at a bar in the South End.

He ended up there because it was a few blocks from his apartment and that night, the first of the year to hint of summer, the streets smelled damp and hopeful. She went to the bar because she'd gotten divorced that afternoon and needed to feel brave. She worried her fear of people was metastasizing and she wanted to get on top of it, to prove to herself she was in command of her own neuroses. It was May, and she'd barely left the house since early winter.

She'd go out for groceries but only when the supermarket was at its emptiest. Seven o'clock on a Tuesday morning was ideal, the pallets of shrink-wrapped stock still waiting in the middle of the aisles, the dairy guys talking smack to the deli guys, the cashiers putting their purses away and yawning into cups of Dunkin's, bitching about the commute, the weather, their impossible kids, their impossible husbands.

When she needed her hair cut, she always scheduled the last appointment of the day. Same for the rare manicure or pedicure. Most other wants could be satisfied online. Soon, what started as a choice — staying out of the public eye to avoid scrutiny or its bedfellow, judgment — grew into a habit that bordered on addiction. Before Sebastian officially left her, he'd been sleeping in the guest room for six months, throughout the summer prior to that, he'd slept on his boat in the South River, a tidal flat that emptied into Massachusetts Bay. It was fitting — Sebastian had probably never loved her, probably never loved any human being, but, man, he loved that boat. Once he was gone, though, her primary motivation for leaving the house — to escape him and all his toxic disregard — was neutralised.

But spring hit, and she could hear voices, unburned and pleasant, return to the street along with the shouts of children, the clack of stroller wheels along the sidewalk, the squeak and snap of screen doors. The house she'd purchased with Sebastian was 30 miles south of Boston in Marshfield. It was a seaside town, though their house sat a full mile inland, which was fine because Rachel wasn't a fan of the ocean. Sebastian, of course, loved the sea, had even taught her to scuba back in the early days

of their courtship. When she finally admitted to him that she hated being submerged in liquid as potential predators watched her from the depths, instead of being flattered she'd temporarily conquered her fear to make him happy, he accused her of pretending to love the things he loved in order to "trap" him. She'd retorted that one only trapped things one wanted to eat and she'd lost her appetite for him a long time ago. It was a nasty thing to say but when a relationship collapsed with the speed and severity of her and Sebastian's, nasty became the norm. Once the divorce was final, they would put the house on the market and split any profit to be had, and she'd need to find another place.

By **DENNIS LEHANE**

Which was fine. She missed the city, had never taken to having to drive everywhere. And if her notoriety was difficult to escape in the city, it was impossible in a small town, where gazes came steeped in gradations of provincialism. Just a couple of weeks back, she'd been caught out in the open

while pumping gas, she hadn't realised until she pulled in with a bone-dry tank that the station was self-serve only. Three high school girls, reality-TV-ready in their push-up bras, yoga pants, satiny blowouts and diamond-cut cheekbones, exited the Food Mart on their way to a boy in a skin-tight thermal sweatshirt and distressed jeans, who pumped gas into a pristine Lexus SUV. As soon as they noticed Rachel, the trio started whispering and shoving each other. When she looked over, one of them reddened and dropped her gaze but the other two doubled down. The dark-haired one with the peach highlights mimed someone guzzling from a bottle and her honey-blond partner-in-bitch screwed up her features into a pantomime of helpless weeping, then wrung her hands in the air as if freeing them of seaweed.

The third one said, "Guys, stop," but it came out half lament, half giggle and then the laughter broke. From all their pretty-ugly mouths like Friday night Kahlúa vomit.

Rachel hadn't left the house since. She almost ran out of food. She did run out of wine. Then vodka. She ran out of sites to surf and shows to watch. Then Sebastian called to remind her the divorce hearing was scheduled for that Tuesday, May 17, at 3:30.

She made herself presentable and drove

into the city. She realised only after she'd gotten on Route 3 heading north that it had been six months since she'd driven on a highway. The other cars raced and revved and swarmed. Their bodies gleamed like knives in the harsh sunlight. They engulfed her, stabbing at the air, surging and stabbing and braking, red taillights flashing like furious eyes. Great, Rachel thought as the anxiety found her throat and her skin and the roots of her hair, now I'm afraid of driving.

She managed to make it into the city, and it felt like she was getting away with something because she shouldn't have been on the road, not feeling this vulnerable, this hysterical. But she made it. And no one was the wiser. She left the garage and walked across the street and appeared at the appointed time at Suffolk Probate and Family Court on New Chardon Street.

The proceedings were a lot like the marriage and a lot like Sebastian — perfunctory and bloodless. After it was over and their union was, as far as the Commonwealth was concerned, legally dissolved, she turned to share a look with her newly named ex-husband, a look if not of two soldiers who'd found a modicum of victory in walking off the battlefield with their limbs intact, at least of common decency. But Sebastian wasn't across the aisle any longer. He was already halfway out of the courtroom, his back to her, head up, strides long and purposeful. And once he was through the doors, the rest of the people in the courtroom were looking at her with pity or revulsion.

That's who I've become, she thought, a creature below contempt.

Her car was parked at the garage across the street, and from there it was two right turns and a merge onto 93 South to head home. But she thought of all those cars merging and speeding, tapping their brakes and switching lanes with violent jerks of the wheel, and she turned west into the city instead and drove over Beacon Hill, through Back Bay and farther on until she reached the South End. She felt okay during the drive. Only once, when she thought a Nissan was going to pass her on the right as she approached an intersection, did her palms sweat. After a few minutes of driving around, she found the rarest of all things for this neighbourhood, a parking spot, and pulled into it. She sat there and reminded herself to breathe. She waved on two cars that mistook



FICTION

her for someone who was about to depart, not someone who'd just arrived.

"Turn off your fucking engine then," the Driver of the second car yelled, and left a burnt rubber vapour in his wake that smelled like a smoker's burp.

She left her car and wandered the neighbourhood, not entirely aimless but close, remembering that somewhere around here was a bar where she'd once spent a happy night. That was when she was still in print journalism with *The Globe*. Rumours had circulated that the series she'd written on the Mary Ellen McCormack housing project might be nominated for a Pulitzer. It wasn't (though she did win the Horace Greeley Award and the PEN/Winthrop for excellence in investigative journalism) but she didn't care in the end, she knew she'd done good work, and back then, that was enough. It was an old-man bar with a red door called Kennecally's Tap, tucked in one of the last ungentrified blocks in the neighbourhood, if she remembered correctly, the name itself a throwback to a time before all Irish bars had to sound vaguely literary like St James's Gate, Elysian Fields, the Isle of Statues.

She eventually found the red door on a block she hadn't initially recognised because its Toyotas and Volvos had been replaced with Benzes and Range Rover Sports, and the functional bars on the windows had been replaced by filigreed ones with more substantial aesthetic appeal. Kennecally's was still there, but its menu was posted out front now, and they'd gotten rid of the mozzarella sticks and the deep-fried chicken poppers and replaced them with pork cheeks and braised kale.

She walked straight to a free chair in the far corner near the wait staff station, and when the bartender found her, she ordered a vodka rocks and asked if he had the day's paper lying around. She wore a grey hoodie over a white

V-neck T-shirt and dark blue jeans. The flats on her feet were black, scuffed and as forgettable as the rest of her ensemble. It didn't matter. For all the talk of progress, of equal footing, of a post-sexist generation, a woman still couldn't sit alone at a bar and have a drink without drawing stares. She kept her head down and read *The Globe* and sipped her vodka and tried to keep the addled sparrow in her chest from flapping its wings.

The bar wasn't more than a quarter full, which was good, but the clientele was a lot younger than she'd counted on, which wasn't. The old-timers she'd expected to find had been reduced to a quartet of geezers who sat at a scarred table near the back room and slipped out for frequent smoke breaks. It had been naive to think that here, in the trendiest of all Boston neighbourhoods, the shot-'n'-a-beer crowd could have held the line against the single-malt cohort.

Old-timers who embraced day drinking and swilled PBRs and Gansett tall boys without an irony chaser rarely watched the six o'clock news. The younger crowd didn't watch it either, at least not in real time, but they might DVR it or stream it through their laptops later. And they certainly accessed YouTube on a regular basis. When the clip of Rachel's meltdown went viral last fall, there were 80,000 hits in the first 12 hours. Within 24, there were seven memes and a Video mash-up of Rachel blinking, sweating, shivering and hyperventilating, backed by a remix of Beyoncé's "Drunk in Love." That's how it had played out—a drunk reporter loses control during a live report from a Port-au-Prince ghetto. Within 36 hours of the incident, the video had 270,000 hits.

Her few friends told Rachel she likely overestimated the number of people who recognised her in public. They assured her that the very nature of the viral age, its need

for constant replenishment of content, ensured that the video, while watched by many, was remembered by few.

It was fair to assume, however, that half the people in the bar under 35 had seen it. They may have been stoned or drunk at the time, which raised the possibility they'd see the single woman at the bar in the baseball cap reading the newspaper and make no connection. But then again, maybe a few of them had been sober and possessed strong memories.

With a few swift upticks of her gaze, she got a sense of the other people at the bar itself: two office women sipping martinis with an added splash of something punk, five male brokers who pounded beers and fist-bumped over whatever game was on the TV above them, a mixed-sex group of techies in their late 20s who managed to keep their shoulders hunched even when they drank, and a well-dressed and well-groomed couple in their early 30s, the male clearly drunk, the woman clearly disgusted and a little afraid. Those two were the nearest to Rachel—four seats to her right—and at one point one of those seats half toppled into another two, the front pair of legs rising off the floor. The woman said, "Jesus, *enough*," and it was in her voice as it had been in her eyes, the fear and disgust. When the guy said, "Fuckin' calm yourself, you spoiled fuckin' —" Rachel accidentally caught his eye, then his girlfriend's, and they all pretended it didn't happen as he nudged the chair.

She neared the end of her drink and decided this had been a bad idea. Her fear of particular people—i.e., people who'd seen her have an unrestrained panic attack on the six o'clock news—had blinded her to her terror of people in general, an ever-burgeoning phobia she was only now beginning to suspect the breadth of. She should have run back to the house after court. She never should have sat at a bar. Jesus. The sparrow flapped its wings.

She couldn't imagine waiting. Couldn't sit a second longer. Her throat closed. Her vision blurred.



FICTION

Not too spastically, not frantically, not yet. But the tempo was increasing. She was aware of her heart dangling in her chest, suspended from cords of blood. The eyes of the bar were on her, and in the garble of a group of voices behind her, she was nearly positive she heard someone whisper, "That reporter"

She put a \$10 bill on the bar, relieved she had one, because she couldn't imagine waiting for change. Couldn't sit in this seat a second longer. Her throat closed. Her vision blurred at the edges. The air looked as if it had been smelted. She went to stand but the bartender placed a drink in front of her.

"A gentleman sent this over with his 'respect.'"

The group of suit-clad guys across the bar watched the game.

They gave off a former-frat-boy-rapist vibe. Early to mid-30s, the five of them, two going fleshy, all with eyes that were too small and too bright at the same time. The tallest of them gave her a chin tilt of recognition and raised his glass.

She said to the bartender, "Him?"

The bartender looked over his shoulder. "No.

Not the group. Another guy." He scanned the bar. "He must have hit the head."

"Well, tell him thank you, but —"

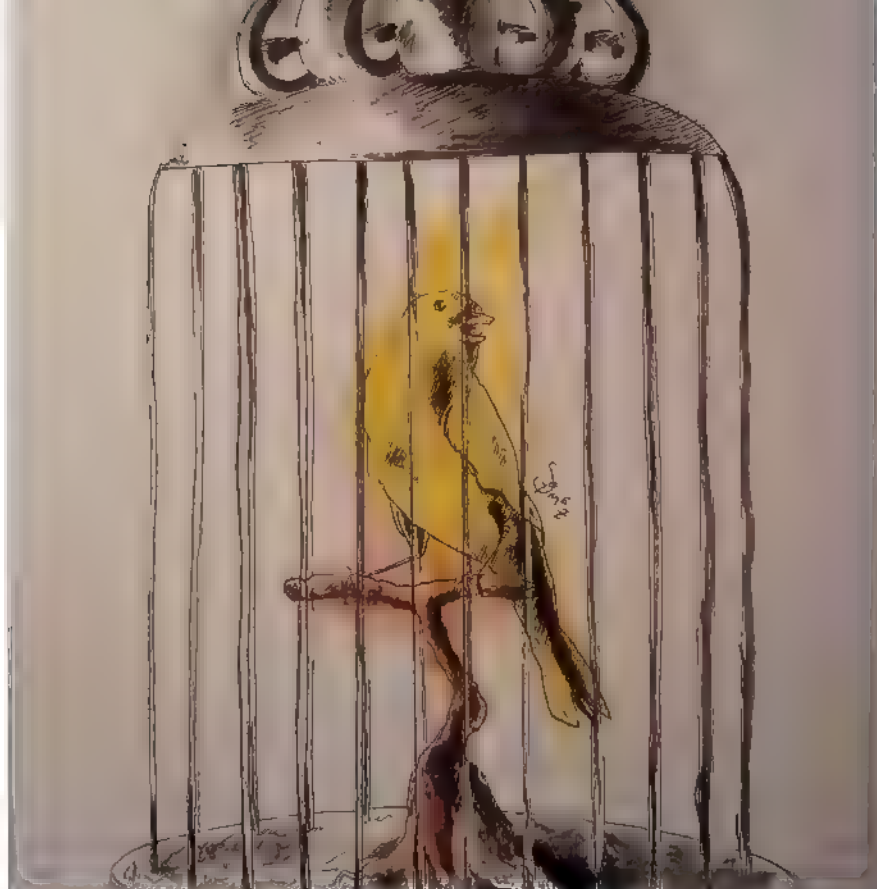
Shit. Now the drunken boyfriend who'd knocked over the chair was approaching, pointing at her like he was a game show host and she'd just won a dinette set. His disgusted and frightened girlfriend was nowhere to be seen. The closer he got, the less good-looking he was. It wasn't that he wasn't fit or didn't have a luxurious tangle of dark hair and full lips draped over a white, wholesome smile, or that he didn't move with a certain style, because all of that was part of the package. As were the eyes, as rich and brown as English toffee, but, oh my, Rachel, what lies behind them — what lies in them — is cruelty. Self-impressed, unreflective cruelty.

You have seen this look before. In Felix Browner. In Josué Dacelus. In projects and high rises. In self-satisfied predators.

"Hey, sorry about that."

"About what?" "My girlfriend. My now *ex* girlfriend and that's been a long time coming. She's got a thing for drama. Everything's drama."

"I think she was just worried you'd had too much to drink."



Why are you even talking, Rachel? Walk away.

He opened his arms wide. "Some people when they have an extra one or two, they get mean, ya know? That's a problem drunk. Me? I get happy. I'm just a happy guy looking to make friends and have a fun night. I don't see how that can be a problem."

"Well, good luck. I gotta —"

He pointed at her drink. "You gotta finish that. Be a crime to let it go to waste." He held out his hand. "I'm Lander."

"Actually, I'm good."

He dropped his hand and turned his head to the bartender. "A Patrón Silver, my good man." He turned back to her. "Why were you watching us?"

"I wasn't watching you."

The bartender brought his drink.

He took a sip. "But you were. I caught your eye."

"You guys were getting a little loud and I looked up."

"We were loud?" he smirked.

"Yes."

"Offended your sense of proprietary, did it?"

"No." She didn't correct his malapropism but she did fail to stifle a sigh.

"Am I boring you?"

"No, you seem like a nice guy, but I've got to go."

He gave her a big friendly smile. "No, you don't. Have that drink."

The bird was starting to flap hard now, its head and beak rising to the base of her throat.

"I'm going to go. Thank you." She slung her bag over her shoulder.

He said, "You're the woman on the news." She didn't feel like living through the five or 10 minutes it would take to deny it and then re-deney it and then ultimately give him his due, and yet she still played dumb. "What woman?"

"The one who flipped out." He glanced at the drink in front of her that she still hadn't touched. "Were you drunk? Or high? Which was it? Come on. You can tell me."

She gave him a tight smile and went to move past him.

Lander said, "Hey, hey, hey," and put his chest between her and the door. "I just want to know." He took one step back and squinted at her. "Just want to know what you were thinking. I mean, I want to be friends."

"I'd like to go." She gestured with her right hand for him to step aside.

He reared his head back, curled his lower lip and mimicked her gesture. "I'm just asking a question. People put their trust in you." He tapped a single finger off her shoulder. "I know, I know, I know, you think I'm drunk and maybe, you know, maybe I am. But what I'm saying is important. I'm a fun guy, I'm a nice guy, my friends think I'm hilarious. I got three sisters."



FICTION

Nobody was moving. No one was trying to help. They were all just watching the show.

Thing is, point is here, that you think like it's okay to start throwing back the sauce on the job because you probably got a net to land in if it backfires. Am I right? Some doctor or venture capitalist hubby who ...” He lost the thought, then caught it again, splayed his pink fingers against the base of his pink throat. “I can’t do that. I gotta go make the money. I bet you got some sugar daddy pays for your Pilates and your Lex and the lunches where you hang with your homegirls and shit all over everything he does for you. Have that drink, bitch. Somebody bought it for you. Show some respect.”

He wavered in front of her. She wondered what she’d do if he touched her shoulder again. Nobody was moving in the bar. No one was saying anything. No one was trying to help. They were all just watching the show.

“I’d like to go,” she repeated and took a step toward the door.

He put that single finger on her shoulder again. “One more minute. Have a drink with me. With us.” He waved at the bar. “Don’t make us feel like you think bad of me. You don’t think bad of me, right? I’m just a guy in the street, I’m just a regular dude. I’m just —”

“Rachel!” Brian Delacroix materialized by Lander’s left shoulder, slid past his hip and was suddenly standing beside her. “I’m so sorry I got hung up.” He gave Lander a distant smile before turning back to her. “Look, we’re late, I’m sorry. Doors were at eight. We gotta go.” He took her vodka off the bar and downed it in one easy swallow.

Brian wore a navy blue suit, white shirt with the top button undone, black tie loosened and slightly askew. He remained quite handsome but not in the way that made you think he’d hold up the bathroom every morning. His look was more rugged, his face just on the right side of craggy, his smile a bit crooked, his wavy black hair not fully tamed. Weathered skin, crow’s feet around the eyes, strong chin and

nose. His blue eyes were open and amused, as if he were perpetually surprised to find himself in situations such as these.

“You look spectacular by the way,” he said. “Again, sorry I got held up. No excuse.” “Whoa, whoa.” Lander squinted at his own drink for a moment. “Okay?”

This could easily be a scam perpetrated by the both of them. Lander played the wolf, she was the unwitting sheep, and the part of the shepherd was played by Brian Delacroix. She found their just happening to find each other on the day of her divorce a bit too coincidental.

She decided not to play along. She held up her hands. “Guys, I think I’m just gonna —”

But Lander didn’t hear her because he pushed Brian. “Yo, bro, you need to step off.”

Brian gave her an amused cock of the eyebrow when Lander called him “bro.” She had to work at it to keep her own smile from breaking out.

He turned to Lander. “Dude, I would, but I can’t. I know, I know, you’re disappointed but, hey, you didn’t know she was waiting on me. You’re a fun guy, though, I can tell. And the night’s young.” He indicated the bartender.

“Tom knows me. Right, Tom?”

Tom said, “I do indeed.”

“So, what’s your name?”

“Lander.”

“Cool name.”

“Thanks.”

“Honey,” he said to Rachel, “why don’t you pull the car around?”

Rachel heard herself say, “Sure.”

“Lander,” he said, but met Rachel’s eyes and flicked his own toward the door, “your money’s no good here tonight. Whatever you imbibe, Tom will put it on my tab.” He flicked his eyes at her again, a little bit more insistently, and this time she moved. “You want to buy a round for those girls over there by the pool table? That’s on me too. The one in the green flannel and the black jeans has been looking at you since I came through the door.”

She made the door and didn’t glance back, though she wanted to. But the last look she’d caught on Lander’s face was of a dog waiting, head cocked, for either a treat or a command. In under a minute, Brian Delacroix had taken ownership of him.

She couldn’t find her car. She walked block after block. She cut east, then west, turned north, retraced her steps south. Somewhere in this collection of wrought-iron fences and railings and chocolate or red brick townhouses was a light gray 2010 Prius.

It was Brian’s voice, she decided as she headed up a side street toward the lights of Copley Square. It was warm, confident and smooth, but not huckster-smooth. It was the voice of a friend you’d been hoping to meet your whole life or a caring uncle who’d left your life too soon but had now returned. It was the voice of home, but not home the reality, home as a construct, home as an ideal.

A few minutes later, that voice entered the air behind her. “I won’t take it personally if you think I’m a stalker and pick up your pace. I won’t. I’ll stay planted to this spot and never see you again.”

She stopped. Turned. Saw him standing back at the mouth of the alley she’d crossed 30 seconds before. He stood under the streetlight with his hands clasped in front of him, and he didn’t move. He’d added a raincoat over the suit.

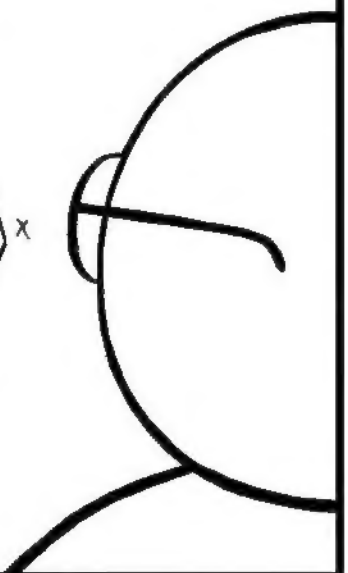
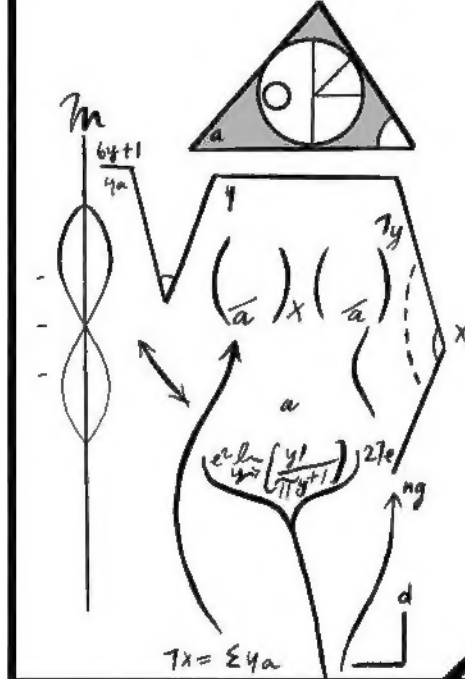
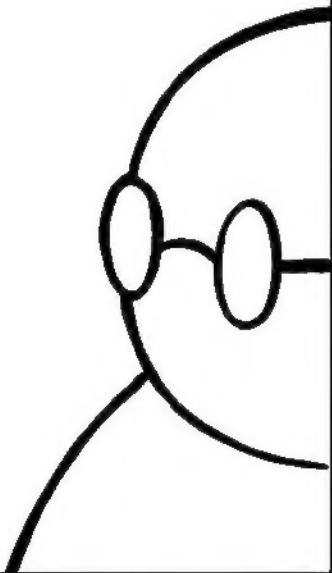
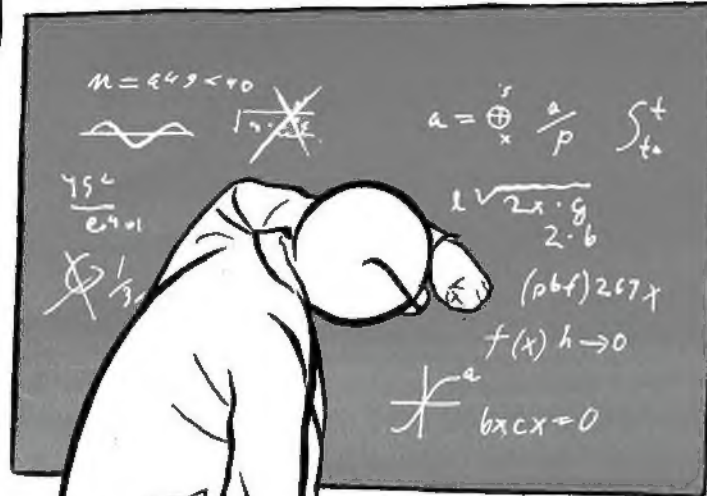
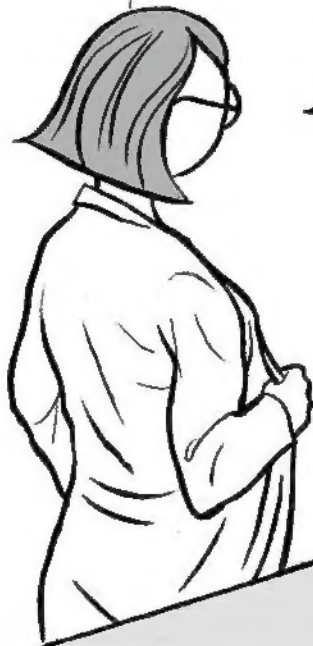
“But if you’re open to a little more of the evening, I’ll stay 10 paces back and follow you wherever you’ll let me buy you a drink.”

She looked at him for a long time, long enough for her to notice that the sparrow had stopped flapping in her chest and the base of her throat had come unblocked. She felt as calm as she’d felt since she was last safe behind closed doors in her own home.

“Make it five paces,” she said.

From Since We Fell by Dennis Lehane, out May 9 from HarperCollins.

You know, Dr. Loring, there's more to life than math.



FLOOR

TECH



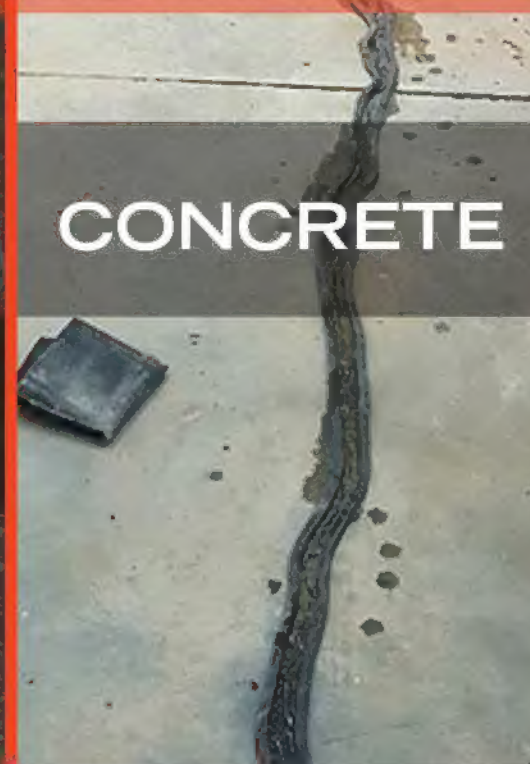
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